

1. Deviance, Crime, and Social Control
  1. [Introduction to Deviance, Crime, and Social Control](#)
  2. [Deviance and Control](#)
  3. [Theoretical Perspectives on Deviance](#)
  4. [Crime and the Law](#)
2. Media and Technology
  1. [Introduction to Media and Technology](#)
  2. [Technology Today](#)
  3. [Media and Technology in Society](#)
  4. [Global Implications of Media and Technology](#)
  5. [Theoretical Perspectives on Media and Technology](#)
3. Social Stratification in the United States
  1. [Introduction to Social Stratification in the United States](#)
  2. [What Is Social Stratification?](#)
  3. [Social Stratification and Mobility in the United States](#)
  4. [Global Stratification and Inequality](#)
  5. [Theoretical Perspectives on Social Stratification](#)
4. Global Economy
  1. [Introduction to Global Inequality](#)
  2. [Global Stratification and Classification](#)
  3. [Global Wealth and Poverty](#)
  4. [Theoretical Perspectives on Global Stratification](#)
5. Race and Ethnicity
  1. [Introduction to Race and Ethnicity](#)
  2. [Racial, Ethnic, and Minority Groups](#)
  3. [Stereotypes, Prejudice, and Discrimination](#)
  4. [Theories of Race and Ethnicity](#)
  5. [Intergroup Relationships](#)
  6. [Race and Ethnicity in the United States](#)

## Introduction to Deviance, Crime, and Social Control

class="introduction"

Washington is one of several states where marijuana use has been legalized, decriminalized, or approved for medical use.

(Photo courtesy of Dominic Simpson/flickr )



Twenty-three states in the United States have passed measures legalizing marijuana in some form; the majority of these states approve only medical use of marijuana, but fourteen states have decriminalized marijuana use, and four states approve recreational use as well. Washington state legalized recreational use in 2012, and in the 2014 midterm elections, voters in Alaska, Oregon, and Washington DC supported ballot measures to allow recreational use in their states as well (Governing 2014). Florida's 2014 medical marijuana proposal fell just short of the 60 percent needed to pass (CBS News 2014).

The Pew Research Center found that a majority of people in the United States (52 percent) now favor legalizing marijuana. This 2013 finding was the first time that a majority of survey respondents supported making marijuana legal. A question about marijuana's legal status was first asked in a 1969 Gallup poll, and only 12 percent of U.S. adults favored legalization at that time. Pew also found that 76 percent of those surveyed currently do not favor jail time for individuals convicted of minor possession of marijuana (Motel 2014).

Even though many people favor legalization, 45 percent do not agree (Motel 2014). Legalization of marijuana in any form remains controversial and is actively opposed; Citizen's Against Legalizing Marijuana (CALM) is one of the largest political action committees (PACs) working to prevent or repeal legalization measures. As in many aspects of sociology, there are no absolute answers about deviance. What people agree is deviant differs in various societies and subcultures, and it may change over time.

Tattoos, vegan lifestyles, single parenthood, breast implants, and even jogging were once considered deviant but are now widely accepted. The change process usually takes some time and may be accompanied by significant disagreement, especially for social norms that are viewed as essential. For example, divorce affects the social institution of family, and so divorce carried a deviant and stigmatized status at one time. Marijuana use was once seen as deviant and criminal, but U.S. social norms on this issue are changing.

## **References**

CBS News. 2014. "Marijuana Advocates Eye New Targets After Election Wins." Associated Press, November 5. Retrieved November 5, 2014 (<http://www.cbsnews.com/news/marijuana-activists-eye-new-targets-after-election-wins/>).

Governing. 2014. "Governing Data: State Marijuana Laws Map." Governing: The States and Localities, November 5. Retrieved November 5, 2014 (<http://www.governing.com/gov-data/state-marijuana-laws-map-medical-recreational.html>).

Pew Research Center. 2013. "Partisans Disagree on Legalization of Marijuana, but Agree on Law Enforcement Policies." Pew Research Center, April 30. Retrieved November 2, 2014 (<http://www.pewresearch.org/daily-number/partisans-disagree-on-legalization-of-marijuana-but-agree-on-law-enforcement-policies/>).

Motel, Seth. 2014. "6 Facts About Marijuana." Pew Research Center: FactTank: News in the Numbers, November 5. Retrieved (<http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/11/05/6-facts-about-marijuana/>).



## Deviance and Control

- Define deviance, and explain the nature of deviant behavior
- Differentiate between methods of social control



Much of the appeal of watching entertainers perform in drag comes from the humor inherent in seeing everyday norms violated. (Photo courtesy of Cassiopeiya/Wikimedia Commons)

**Deviance** refers to any violation of norms. It's that simple, but then, we need to recall what "norms" mean. Norms govern socially acceptable "behaviors," or can be seen as rules for what is appropriate to do and what is not. In short, deviance is, do something that our society judges is inappropriate to do. The difficulty here lies in that behaviors completely appropriate in one society or in an era may not be so in another. This means that giving an example of a deviant activity, which everybody would understand, is difficult, especially in culturally diverse societies or in rapidly changing societies. "When people in New York drive cars," for example, "they keep screaming the F word." "Hm, interesting... But which part of this is an example of deviance?"

Any violation of laws is considered **crime**. The difference between deviance and crime lies in that while the former is socially (or informally) penalized, the latter is legally (formally) penalized. The similarity between them, on the other hand, is that just as the judgment of deviance varies across societies and changes over time, that of crime varies, as well. Depending on the state laws, for example, whether using marijuana is a crime or not varies. Or "harakiri" (the samurai way of suicide) was considered honorable in the past, but it is a crime today.

## **Social Control**

All societies practice **social control**, the regulation and enforcement of norms. The underlying goal of social control is to maintain **social order**, an arrangement of practices and behaviors on which society's members base their daily lives. But then, again, it's important to see that there's no such thing as universally agreeable social order. Something that is orderly to some, that is, may not be so to others. In the U.S., even slavery was considered orderly until the latter half of the nineteenth century. What about same-sex marriage today?

A means to enforcing rules is known as **sanctions**. Sanctions can be positive or negative. **Positive sanctions** are rewards given for conforming to norms. The high five and thumbs up are examples. **Negative sanctions** are punishments for violating norms. A frown or looking the other way is an example. Sometimes, negative sanctions can take a form of violence, be it psychological or physical. Some types of hate crimes, such as those against LGBT, can be seen as this.

## **Summary**

Deviance refers to any violation of norms. Whether or not something is deviant depends on contextual definitions, the situation, and people's response to the behavior. Society seeks to limit deviance through the use of sanctions that help maintain a system of social control.

## **Further Research**

Although we rarely think of it in this way, deviance can have a positive effect on society. Check out the Positive Deviance Initiative, a program initiated by Tufts University to promote social movements around the world that strive to improve people's lives, at [http://openstaxcollege.org/l/Positive\\_Deviance](http://openstaxcollege.org/l/Positive_Deviance).

## References

Becker, Howard. 1963. *Outsiders: Studies in the Sociology of Deviance*. New York: Free Press.

Schoepflin, Todd. 2011. "Deviant While Driving?" Everyday Sociology Blog, January 28. Retrieved February 10, 2012 (<http://nortonbooks.typepad.com/everydaysociology/2011/01/deviant-while-driving.html>).

Sumner, William Graham. 1955 [1906]. *Folkways*. New York, NY: Dover.

## Glossary

deviance

a violation of contextual, cultural, or social norms

formal sanctions

sanctions that are officially recognized and enforced

informal sanctions

sanctions that occur in face-to-face interactions

negative sanctions

punishments for violating norms

positive sanctions

rewards given for conforming to norms

sanctions

the means of enforcing rules

social control

the regulation and enforcement of norms

social order

an arrangement of practices and behaviors on which society's members  
base their daily lives

## Theoretical Perspectives on Deviance

- Describe the functionalist view of deviance in society through four sociologist's theories
- Explain how conflict theory understands deviance and crime in society
- Describe the symbolic interactionist approach to deviance, including labeling and other theories



Functionalists believe that deviance plays an important role in society and can be used to challenge people's views. Protesters, such as these PETA members, often use this method to draw attention to their cause. (Photo courtesy of David Shankbone/flickr)

Why does deviance occur? How does it affect a society? Since the early days of sociology, scholars have developed theories that attempt to explain what deviance and crime mean to society. These theories can be grouped according to the three major sociological paradigms: functionalism, symbolic interactionism, and conflict theory.

### Functionalism

The basic ideas of functionalism, or structural functionalism, center around the way the different elements of a society (or parts of a structure)

contribute to the whole. Even deviance is seen as a component of a society in this sociological paradigm. How? Let's see it in this section.

## **Émile Durkheim: The Essential Nature of Deviance**

Émile Durkheim believed that deviance is a functional component in a society in several ways, namely, reaffirmation of norms, in-group solidarity, and social change.

- First, deviants (i.e., those who violate norms) show their societies examples of how not to behave, owing to which norms are reaffirmed conversely.
- Second, people place deviants in out-group (or "they") and themselves, in in-group ("we"). This can help maintain social solidarity within in-group.
- Third, sometimes there are situations in which deviants are correct and all others, wrong. About four hundred years ago, for example, Galileo was one of the very few who came to claim that our planet circulates around the sun, and not the other way around. He was heavily penalized as a deviant, but he was correct and almost all others, wrong. Societies can change in right ways, sometimes owing to those called deviants.

## **Robert Merton: Strain Theory**

Sociologist Robert Merton agreed that deviance is an inherent part of a functioning society, but he expanded on Durkheim's ideas by developing **strain theory**, which demonstrates that the accessibility to socially legitimate "means" (or tools) to socially shared "end" (goals) plays a part in determining if a person conforms or deviates. Americans are encouraged, for example, to achieve the "American Dream" of financial success. In terms of the accessibility to means to this dream, however, not everyone in our society stands on equal footing. According to Merton's theory, if people



lack means to end, but nonetheless if they still try to pursue end, they tend to have higher chances to be involved in criminal activities.

	Wealth, Yes	Wealth, No
Higher Education, Yes	The Established	e.g., School Teacher
Higher Education, No	<i>Innovation</i> (e.g., Drug Dealers)	The Poor

### The Strain Theory: Means (e.g., Education) and End (Wealth)

As shown above, there are four combinations between the two variables, i.e., "means" and "end." Education is given as an example of legitimate means to socially shared end, wealth in this discussion.

- The combination of "higher education yes" and "wealth yes" results in the established people. There's no problem; they got socially shared end through legitimate means.
- The combination of "higher education yes" and "wealth no" results in educated but not that rich people, such as school teachers. There's no problem here, either.
- The combination of "higher education no" and "wealth no" results simply in the poor people. Legally saying, they don't have a problem, either.
- The combination of "higher education no" but "wealth yes," however, results in what Robert Merton called *innovation*. It means that these people didn't have legitimate means (education) but got socially shared end (wealth). They are the ones who tend to have higher chances to be involved in criminal activities, such as drug dealing.

Notice that Merton's theory refers only to social environments, such as the accessibility to means to end, and to nothing like criminal personalities, dispositions, or family records. This is, therefore, very sociological, implying that some particular social conditions and locations can strain or allure individuals placed in them.

## **Conflict Theory**

### **Karl Marx: An Unequal System**

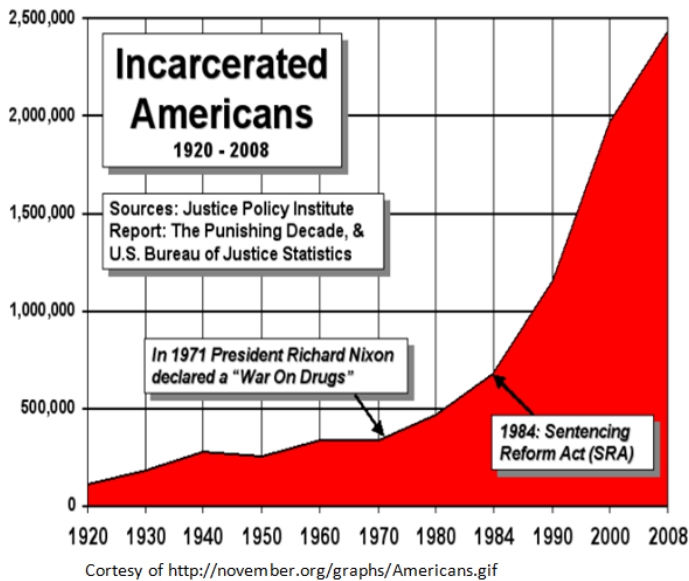
Initiated by Karl Marx, **conflict theory** looks to social and economic factors as the causes of crime and deviance. Marx believed that the general population was divided into two groups. He labeled the wealthy, who controlled the means of production and business, the *bourgeois*. He labeled the workers, who depended on the bourgeois for employment and survival, the *proletariat*. Marx believed that the bourgeois centralized their power and influence through government, laws, and other authority agencies in order to maintain and expand their positions of power in society. Though Marx spoke little of deviance, his ideas created the foundation for conflict theorists who study the intersection of deviance and crime with wealth and power.

### **Race Matters**

One in every three black males born today can expect to go to prison at some point in their life, compared with one in every six Latino males, and one in every 17 white males, if current incarceration trends continue (huffintonpost.com).

According to Justice Department data cited in the report, police arrested black youth for drug crimes at more than twice the rate of white youth between 1980 and 2010, nationwide. Yet a 2012 study from the National Institute on Drug Abuse found that white high-school students were slightly more likely to have abused illegal drugs within the past month than black students of the same age.

## Privatization of Prisons



The drug war led the country's population of incarcerated drug offenders to soar from 42,000 in 1980 to nearly half a million, an increase by more than 10 times, in 2007. Behind this looms the privatization of prisons growing in the 1980s when Ronald Reagan was the U.S. president--i.e., prisons are now run by private corporations for profit (Michaels 2010). A juvenile court judge was paid by private prison officials to sentence kids to harsher punishments in order to keep the company's private facility filled (Brickner et al. 2011). Also, private-prison companies have indirectly supported policies that put more Americans behind bars--such as California's three-strikes rule--by donating to politicians who support them (Washington Post 2015)

## Symbolic Interactionism

Symbolic interactionism is a micro-level approach that helps explain how societies or their segments come to view behaviors as deviant or conventional. Labeling theory and control theory, among others, fall within the realm of symbolic interactionism.

## Labeling Theory

Usually, people are labeled deviants because they violate norms. According to **labeling theory**, however, the other way around is also quite possible. That is, people violate norms because they are labeled deviants. Some suggest, for example, to label a teenager a delinquent can trigger a process that leads to greater involvement in deviance (Lopes et al. 2012). To avoid the label of delinquent, indeed, some judges divert youthful offenders away from the criminal justice system or jail, which can fatally label them, and instead assign them to social workers and counselors.

## **Control Theory**

Continuing with an examination of large social factors, **control theory** states that social control is directly affected by the strength of social bonds and that deviance results from a feeling of disconnection from society. Individuals who believe they are a part of society are less likely to commit crimes against it.

Travis Hirschi (1969) identified four types of social bonds that connect people to society:

1. *Attachment* measures our connections to others. When we are closely attached to people, we worry about their opinions of us. People conform to society's norms in order to gain approval (and prevent disapproval) from family, friends, and romantic partners.
2. *Commitment* refers to the investments we make in the community. A well-respected local businesswoman who volunteers at her synagogue and is a member of the neighborhood block organization has more to lose from committing a crime than a woman who doesn't have a career or ties to the community.
3. Similarly, levels of *involvement*, or participation in socially legitimate activities, lessen a person's likelihood of deviance. Children who are members of little league baseball teams have fewer family crises.
4. The final bond, *belief*, is an agreement on common values in society. If a person views social values as beliefs, he or she will conform to them. An environmentalist is more likely to pick up trash in a park, because a clean environment is a social value to him (Hirschi 1969).

## Summary

The three major sociological paradigms offer different explanations for the motivation behind deviance and crime. Functionalists point out that deviance can be functional since it reinforces norms by reminding people of the consequences of violating them. Conflict theorists argue that crime stems from a system of inequality that keeps those with power at the top and those without power at the bottom. Symbolic interactionists focus on the socially constructed nature of the labels related to deviance. Crime and deviance are learned from the environment and enforced or discouraged by those around us.

## Further Research

The Skull and Bones Society made news in 2004 when it was revealed that then-President George W. Bush and his Democratic challenger, John Kerry, had both been members at Yale University. In the years since, conspiracy theorists have linked the secret society to numerous world events, arguing that many of the nation's most powerful people are former Bonesmen. Although such ideas may raise a lot of skepticism, many influential people of the past century have been Skull and Bones Society members, and the society is sometimes described as a college version of the power elite. Journalist Rebecca Leung discusses the roots of the club and the impact its ties between decision-makers can have later in life. Read about it at [http://openstaxcollege.org/l/Skull and Bones](http://openstaxcollege.org/l/Skull_and_Bones).

## References

Brickner, Michael and Shakyra Diaz. 2011. "Prisons for Profit: Incarceration for Sale." *Human Rights*, Vol. 38, No. 3, Perceptions of Punishment (Summer), pp. 13-16.

Cantor, D. and Lynch, J. 2000. *Self-Report Surveys as Measures of Crime and Criminal Victimization*. Rockville, MD: National Institute of Justice. Retrieved February 10, 2012 ([https://www.ncjrs.gov/criminal\\_justice2000/vol\\_4/04c.pdf](https://www.ncjrs.gov/criminal_justice2000/vol_4/04c.pdf)).

Durkheim, Émile. 1997 [1893]. *The Division of Labor in Society* New York, NY: Free Press.

Hirschi, Travis. 1969. *Causes of Delinquency*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Huffingtonpost.com. “1 in 3 Black Males Will Go to Prison in Their Lifetime, Report Warns.” ([www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/10/04/racial-disparities-criminal-justice\\_n\\_4045144.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/10/04/racial-disparities-criminal-justice_n_4045144.html)).

Holding, Reynolds. 2006. “Why Can’t Felons Vote?” *Time*, November 21. Retrieved February 10, 2012 (<http://www.time.com/time/nation/article/0,8599,1553510,00.html>).

Krajick, Kevin. 2004. “Why Can’t Ex-Felons Vote?” *The Washington Post*, August 18, p. A19. Retrieved February 10, 2012 (<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A9785-2004Aug17.html>).

Lopes, Giza, Marvin D. Krohn, Alan J. Lizotte, Nicole M. Schmidt, Bob Edward Vásquez, and Jón Gunnar Bernburg. 2012. “Labeling and Cumulative Disadvantage: The Impact of Formal Police Intervention on Life Chances and Crime during Emerging Adulthood.” *Crime and Delinquency*, 58, 3:456–488.

Lott, John R. Jr. and Sonya D. Jones. 2008. “How Felons Who Vote Can Tip an Election.” Fox News, October 20. Retrieved February 10, 2012 (<http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,441030,00.html>).

Michaels, Jon D. 2010. “Privatization's Pretensions.” *The University of Chicago Law Review*, Vol. 77, No. 2 (Spring), pp. 717-780.

Mills, C. Wright. 1956. *The Power Elite*. New York: Oxford University Press.

New York Times Editorial Staff. 2011. “Reducing Unjust Cocaine Sentences.” *New York Times*, June 29. Retrieved February 10, 2012 (<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/30/opinion/30thu3.html>).



ProCon.org. 2009. "Disenfranchised Totals by State." April 13. Retrieved February 10, 2012 (<http://felonvoting.procon.org/view.resource.php?resourceID=000287>).

ProCon.org. 2011. "State Felon Voting Laws." April 8. Retrieved February 10, 2012 (<http://felonvoting.procon.org/view.resource.php?resourceID=000286>).

Sampson, Robert J. and Lydia Bean. 2006. "Cultural Mechanisms and Killing Fields: A Revised Theory of Community-Level Racial Inequality." *The Many Colors of Crime: Inequalities of Race, Ethnicity and Crime in America*, edited by R. Peterson, L. Krivo and J. Hagan. New York: New York University Press.

Sampson, Robert J. and W. Byron Graves. 1989. "Community Structure and Crimes: Testing Social-Disorganization Theory." *American Journal of Sociology* 94:774-802.

*Time*. 2016. "How Bernie Sanders Blamed Wall Street for Almost Everything." Jan. 17, Politics.

The Washington Post. 2015. "How for-profit prisons have become the biggest lobby no one is talking about." April, 28. ([https://www.washingtonpost.com/posteverything/wp/2015/04/28/how-for-profit-prisons-have-become-the-biggest-lobby-no-one-is-talking-about/?utm\\_term=.0a2a6be638f6](https://www.washingtonpost.com/posteverything/wp/2015/04/28/how-for-profit-prisons-have-become-the-biggest-lobby-no-one-is-talking-about/?utm_term=.0a2a6be638f6))

## Glossary

### conflict theory

a theory that examines social and economic factors as the causes of criminal deviance

### control theory

a theory that states social control is directly affected by the strength of social bonds and that deviance results from a feeling of disconnection from society

cultural deviance theory

a theory that suggests conformity to the prevailing cultural norms of lower-class society causes crime

differential association theory

a theory that states individuals learn deviant behavior from those close to them who provide models of and opportunities for deviance

labeling theory

the ascribing of a deviant behavior to another person by members of society

master status

a label that describes the chief characteristic of an individual

power elite

a small group of wealthy and influential people at the top of society who hold the power and resources

primary deviance

a violation of norms that does not result in any long-term effects on the individual's self-image or interactions with others

secondary deviance

deviance that occurs when a person's self-concept and behavior begin to change after his or her actions are labeled as deviant by members of society

social disorganization theory

a theory that asserts crime occurs in communities with weak social ties and the absence of social control

strain theory

a theory that addresses the relationship between having socially acceptable goals and having socially acceptable means to reach those goals

## Crime and the Law

- Identify and differentiate between different types of crimes
- Evaluate U.S. crime statistics
- Understand the three branches of the U.S. criminal justice system



How is a crime different from other types of deviance? (Photo courtesy of Duffman/Wikimedia Commons.)

Although deviance is a violation of social norms, it's not always punishable, and it's not necessarily bad. **Crime**, on the other hand, is a behavior that violates official law and is punishable through formal sanctions. Walking to class backward is a deviant behavior. Driving with a blood alcohol percentage over the state's limit is a crime. Like other forms of deviance, however, ambiguity exists concerning what constitutes a crime and whether all crimes are, in fact, "bad" and deserve punishment. For example, during the 1960s, civil rights activists often violated laws intentionally as part of their effort to bring about racial equality. In hindsight, we recognize that the laws that deemed many of their actions crimes—for instance, Rosa Parks taking a seat in the "whites only" section of the bus—were inconsistent with social equality.

As you have learned, all societies have informal and formal ways of maintaining social control. Within these systems of norms, societies have **legal codes** that maintain formal social control through laws, which are rules adopted and enforced by a political authority. Those who violate these rules incur negative formal sanctions. Normally, punishments are relative to the degree of the crime and the importance to society of the value underlying the law. As we will see, however, there are other factors that influence criminal sentencing.

## Types of Crimes

Not all crimes are given equal weight. Society generally socializes its members to view certain crimes as more severe than others. For example, most people would consider murdering someone to be far worse than stealing a wallet and would expect a murderer to be punished more severely than a thief. In modern U.S. society, crimes are classified as one of two types based on their severity. **Violent crimes** (also known as “crimes against a person”) are based on the use of force or the threat of force. Rape, murder, and armed robbery fall under this category. **Nonviolent crimes** involve the destruction or theft of property but do not use force or the threat of force. Because of this, they are also sometimes called “property crimes.” Larceny, car theft, and vandalism are all types of nonviolent crimes. If you use a crowbar to break into a car, you are committing a nonviolent crime; if you mug someone with the crowbar, you are committing a violent crime.

When we think of crime, we often picture **street crime**, or offenses committed by ordinary people against other people or organizations, usually in public spaces. An often overlooked category is **corporate crime**, or crime committed by white-collar workers in a business environment. Embezzlement, insider trading, and identity theft are all types of corporate crime. Although these types of offenses rarely receive the same amount of media coverage as street crimes, they can be far more damaging. Financial frauds such as insurance scams, Ponzi schemes, and improper practices by banks can devastate families who lose their savings or home.

An often-debated third type of crime is **victimless crime**. Crimes are called victimless when the perpetrator is not explicitly harming another person. As

opposed to battery or theft, which clearly have a victim, a crime like drinking a beer when someone is twenty years old or selling a sexual act do not result in injury to anyone other than the individual who engages in them, although they are illegal. While some claim acts like these are victimless, others argue that they actually do harm society. Prostitution may foster abuse toward women by clients or pimps. Drug use may increase the likelihood of employee absences. Such debates highlight how the deviant and criminal nature of actions develops through ongoing public discussion.

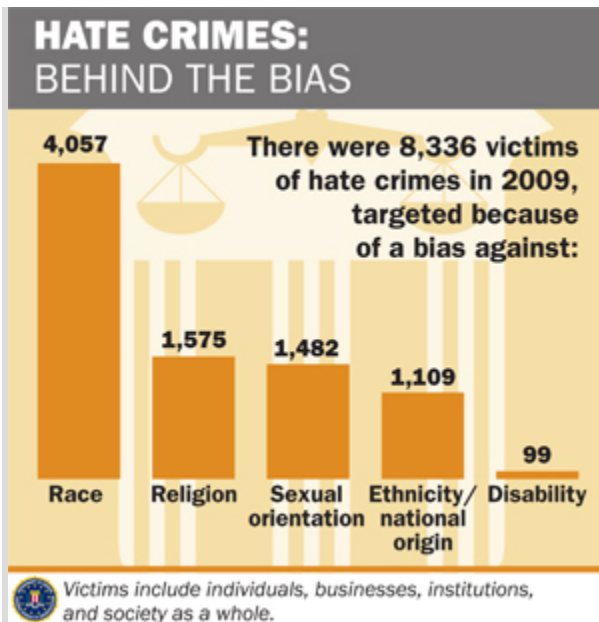
**Note:**

**Hate Crimes**

On the evening of October 3, 2010, a seventeen-year-old boy from the Bronx was abducted by a group of young men from his neighborhood and taken to an abandoned row house. After being beaten, the boy admitted he was gay. His attackers seized his partner and beat him as well. Both victims were drugged, sodomized, and forced to burn one another with cigarettes. When questioned by police, the ringleader of the crime explained that the victims were gay and “looked like [they] liked it” (Wilson and Baker 2010).

Attacks based on a person’s race, religion, or other characteristics are known as **hate crimes**. Hate crimes in the United States evolved from the time of early European settlers and their violence toward Native Americans. Such crimes weren’t investigated until the early 1900s, when the Ku Klux Klan began to draw national attention for its activities against blacks and other groups. The term “hate crime,” however, didn’t become official until the 1980s (Federal Bureau of Investigations 2011).

An average of 195,000 Americans fall victim to hate crimes each year, but fewer than five percent ever report the crime (FBI 2010). The majority of hate crimes are racially motivated, but many are based on religious (especially anti-Semitic) prejudice (FBI 2010). After incidents like the murder of Matthew Shepard in Wyoming in 1998 and the tragic suicide of Rutgers University student Tyler Clementi in 2010, there has been a growing awareness of hate crimes based on sexual orientation.



In the United States, there were 8,336 reported victims of hate crimes in 2009. This represents less than five percent of the number of people who claimed to be victims of hate crimes when surveyed. (Graph courtesy of FBI 2010)

## Crime Statistics

The FBI gathers data from approximately 17,000 law enforcement agencies, and the Uniform Crime Reports (UCR) is the annual publication of this data (FBI 2011). The UCR has comprehensive information from police reports but fails to account for the many crimes that go unreported, often due to victims' fear, shame, or distrust of the police. The quality of this data is also inconsistent because of differences in approaches to gathering victim data; important details are not always asked for or reported (Cantor and Lynch 2000).



Due to these issues, the U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics publishes a separate self-report study known as the National Crime Victimization Report (NCVR). A **self-report study** is a collection of data gathered using voluntary response methods, such as questionnaires or telephone interviews. Self-report data are gathered each year, asking approximately 160,000 people in the United States about the frequency and types of crime they've experienced in their daily lives (BJS 2013). The NCVR reports a higher rate of crime than the UCR, likely picking up information on crimes that were experienced but never reported to the police. Age, race, gender, location, and income-level demographics are also analyzed (National Archive of Criminal Justice Data 2010).

The NCVR survey format allows people to more openly discuss their experiences and also provides a more-detailed examination of crimes, which may include information about consequences, relationship between victim and criminal, and substance abuse involved. One disadvantage is that the NCVR misses some groups of people, such as those who don't have telephones and those who move frequently. The quality of information may also be reduced by inaccurate victim recall of the crime (Cantor and Lynch 2000).

## **Public Perception of Crime**

Neither the NCVR nor the UCS accounts for all crime in the United States, but general trends can be determined. Crime rates, particularly for violent and gun-related crimes, have been on the decline since peaking in the early 1990s (Cohn, Taylor, Lopez, Gallagher, Parker, and Maass 2013). However, the public believes crime rates are still high, or even worsening. Recent surveys (Saad 2011; Pew Research Center 2013, cited in Overburg and Hoyer 2013) have found U.S. adults believe crime is worse now than it was twenty years ago.

Inaccurate public perception of crime may be heightened by popular crime shows such as *CSI*, *Criminal Minds* and *Law & Order* (Warr 2008) and by extensive and repeated media coverage of crime. Many researchers have found that people who closely follow media reports of crime are likely to estimate the crime rate as inaccurately high and more likely to feel fearful

about the chances of experiencing crime (Chiricos, Padgett, and Gertz 2000). Recent research has also found that people who reported watching news coverage of 9/11 or the Boston Marathon Bombing for more than an hour daily became more fearful of future terrorism (Holman, Garfin, and Silver 2014).

## **The U.S. Criminal Justice System**

A **criminal justice system** is an organization that exists to enforce a legal code. There are three branches of the U.S. criminal justice system: the police, the courts, and the corrections system.

### **Police**

**Police** are a civil force in charge of enforcing laws and public order at a federal, state, or community level. No unified national police force exists in the United States, although there are federal law enforcement officers. Federal officers operate under specific government agencies such as the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI); the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF); and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). Federal officers can only deal with matters that are explicitly within the power of the federal government, and their field of expertise is usually narrow. A county police officer may spend time responding to emergency calls, working at the local jail, or patrolling areas as needed, whereas a federal officer would be more likely to investigate suspects in firearms trafficking or provide security for government officials.

State police have the authority to enforce statewide laws, including regulating traffic on highways. Local or county police, on the other hand, have a limited jurisdiction with authority only in the town or county in which they serve.



Here, Afghan National Police  
Crisis Response Unit members  
train in Surobi, Afghanistan.

(Photo courtesy of  
isafmedia/flickr)

## Courts

Once a crime has been committed and a violator has been identified by the police, the case goes to court. A **court** is a system that has the authority to make decisions based on law. The U.S. judicial system is divided into federal courts and state courts. As the name implies, federal courts (including the U.S. Supreme Court) deal with federal matters, including trade disputes, military justice, and government lawsuits. Judges who preside over federal courts are selected by the president with the consent of Congress.

State courts vary in their structure but generally include three levels: trial courts, appellate courts, and state supreme courts. In contrast to the large courtroom trials in TV shows, most noncriminal cases are decided by a judge without a jury present. Traffic court and small claims court are both types of trial courts that handle specific civil matters.

Criminal cases are heard by trial courts with general jurisdictions. Usually, a judge and jury are both present. It is the jury's responsibility to determine guilt and the judge's responsibility to determine the penalty, though in some states the jury may also decide the penalty. Unless a defendant is found "not guilty," any member of the prosecution or defense (whichever is the losing side) can appeal the case to a higher court. In some states, the case then goes to a special appellate court; in others it goes to the highest state court, often known as the state supreme court.



This county courthouse in Kansas (left) is a typical setting for a state trial court. Compare this to the courtroom of the Michigan Supreme Court (right). (Photo (a) courtesy of Ammodramus/Wikimedia Commons; Photo (b) courtesy of Steve & Christine/Wikimedia Commons)

## Corrections

The **corrections system**, more commonly known as the prison system, is charged with supervising individuals who have been arrested, convicted, and sentenced for a criminal offense. At the end of 2010, approximately seven million U.S. men and women were behind bars (BJS 2011d).

The U.S. incarceration rate has grown considerably in the last hundred years. In 2008, more than 1 in 100 U.S. adults were in jail or prison, the highest benchmark in our nation's history. And while the United States accounts for 5 percent of the global population, we have 25 percent of the world's inmates, the largest number of prisoners in the world (Liptak 2008b).

Prison is different from jail. A jail provides temporary confinement, usually while an individual awaits trial or parole. Prisons are facilities built for individuals serving sentences of more than a year. Whereas jails are small and local, prisons are large and run by either the state or the federal government.

Parole refers to a temporary release from prison or jail that requires supervision and the consent of officials. Parole is different from probation, which is supervised time used as an alternative to prison. Probation and parole can both follow a period of incarceration in prison, especially if the prison sentence is shortened.

## **Summary**

Crime is established by legal codes and upheld by the criminal justice system. In the United States, there are three branches of the justice system: police, courts, and corrections. Although crime rates increased throughout most of the twentieth century, they are now dropping.

## **Further Research**

Is the U.S. criminal justice system confusing? You're not alone. Check out this handy flowchart from the Bureau of Justice Statistics:

[http://openstaxcollege.org/l/US\\_Criminal\\_Justice\\_BJS](http://openstaxcollege.org/l/US_Criminal_Justice_BJS)

How is crime data collected in the United States? Read about the methods of data collection and take the National Crime Victimization Survey. Visit

[http://openstaxcollege.org/l/Victimization\\_Survey](http://openstaxcollege.org/l/Victimization_Survey)

## References

Bureau of Justice Statistics. 2013. "Data Collection: National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS)." Bureau of Justice Statistics, n.d. Retrieved November 1, 2014 (<http://www.bjs.gov/index.cfm?ty=dcdetail&iid=245>)

Cantor, D. and Lynch, J. 2000. *Self-Report Surveys as Measures of Crime and Criminal Victimization*. Rockville, MD: National Institute of Justice. Retrieved February 10, 2012 ([https://www.ncjrs.gov/criminal\\_justice2000/vol\\_4/04c.pdf](https://www.ncjrs.gov/criminal_justice2000/vol_4/04c.pdf)).

Chiricos, Ted; Padgett, Kathy; and Gertz, Mark. 2000. "Fear, TV News, and The Reality of Crime." *Criminology*, 38, 3. Retrieved November 1, 2014 (<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1745-9125.2000.tb00905.x/abstract>)

Cohn, D'Verta; Taylor, Paul; Lopez, Mark Hugo; Gallagher, Catherine A.; Parker, Kim; and Maass, Kevin T. 2013. "Gun Homicide Rate Down 49% Since 1993 Peak: Public Unaware; Pace of Decline Slows in Past Decade." *Pew Research Social & Demographic Trends*, May 7. Retrieved November 1, 2014 (<http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2013/05/07/gun-homicide-rate-down-49-since-1993-peak-public-unaware/>)

Federal Bureau of Investigation. 2010. "Latest Hate Crime Statistics." Retrieved February 10, 2012 ([http://www.fbi.gov/news/stories/2010/november/hate\\_112210/hate\\_112210](http://www.fbi.gov/news/stories/2010/november/hate_112210/hate_112210)).

Federal Bureau of Investigation. 2011. "Uniform Crime Reports." Retrieved February 10, 2012 (<http://www.fbi.gov/about-us/cjis/ucr>).

Holman, E. Allison; Garfin, Dana; and Silver, Roxane (2013). "Media's Role in Broadcasting Acute Stress Following the Boston Marathon Bombings." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the USA*, November 14. Retrieved November 1, 2014 ([http://www.danarosegarfin.com/uploads/3/0/8/5/30858187/holman\\_et\\_al\\_pnas\\_2014.pdf](http://www.danarosegarfin.com/uploads/3/0/8/5/30858187/holman_et_al_pnas_2014.pdf))

Langton, Lynn and Michael Planty. 2011. "Hate Crime, 2003–2009." Bureau of Justice Statistics. Retrieved February 10, 2012 (<http://www.bjs.gov/index.cfm?ty=pbdetail&iid=1760>).

Liptak, Adam. 2008a. "1 in 100 U.S. Adults Behind Bars, New Study Says." *New York Times*, February 28. Retrieved February 10, 2012 (<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/02/28/us/28cnd-prison.html>).

Liptak, Adam. 2008b. "Inmate Count in U.S. Dwarfs Other Nations'." *New York Times*, April 23. Retrieved February 10, 2012 (<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/23/us/23prison.html?ref=adamliptak>).

National Archive of Criminal Justice Data. 2010. "National Crime Victimization Survey Resource Guide." Retrieved February 10, 2012 (<http://www.icpsr.umich.edu/icpsrweb/NACJD/NCVS/>).

Overburg, Paul and Hoyer, Meghan. 2013. "Study: Despite Drop in Gun Crime, 56% Think It's Worse." *USA Today*, December, 3. Retrieved November 2, 2014 (<http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2013/05/07/gun-crime-drops-but-americans-think-its-worse/2139421/>)

Saad, Lydia. 2011. "Most Americans Believe Crime in U.S. is Worsening: Slight Majority Rate U.S. Crime Problem as Highly Serious; 11% Say This about Local Crime." Gallup: Well-Being, October 31. Retrieved November 1, 2014 (<http://www.gallup.com/poll/150464/americans-believe-crime-worsening.aspx>)

Warr, Mark. 2008. "Crime on the Rise? Public Perception of Crime Remains Out of Sync with Reality." The University of Texas at Austin: Features, November, 10. Retrieved November 1, 2014 (<http://www.utexas.edu/features/2008/11/10/crime/>)

Wilson, Michael and Al Baker. 2010. "Lured into a Trap, Then Tortured for Being Gay." *New York Times*, October 8. Retrieved from February 10, 2012 (<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/10/09/nyregion/09bias.html?pagewanted=1>).

## **Glossary**

corporate crime

crime committed by white-collar workers in a business environment

corrections system

the system tasked with supervising individuals who have been arrested for, convicted of, or sentenced for criminal offenses

court

a system that has the authority to make decisions based on law

crime

a behavior that violates official law and is punishable through formal sanctions

criminal justice system

an organization that exists to enforce a legal code

hate crimes

attacks based on a person's race, religion, or other characteristics

legal codes

codes that maintain formal social control through laws

nonviolent crimes

crimes that involve the destruction or theft of property, but do not use force or the threat of force

police

a civil force in charge of regulating laws and public order at a federal, state, or community level

self-report study

a collection of data acquired using voluntary response methods, such as questionnaires or telephone interviews

street crime



crime committed by average people against other people or organizations, usually in public spaces

victimless crime

activities against the law, but that do not result in injury to any individual other than the person who engages in them

violent crimes

crimes based on the use of force or the threat of force

## Introduction to Media and Technology

class="introduction"

Facebook,  
Twitter, and  
Instagram  
are just a few  
examples of  
social media  
that  
increasingly  
shape how  
we interact  
with the  
world.  
(Photo  
courtesy of  
Khalid  
Albaih/flickr  
)



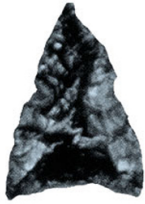
Technology has changed how we interact with each other a lot. It's revolutionary. It has turned “friend” into a verb and has made it possible to share mundane news (“My dog just threw up under the bed! Ugh!”) with hundreds or even thousands of people who might know you only slightly, if at all. You might be glued to your cellphone, even when you should be focused on driving your car, or you might text in class instead of listening to the professor's lecture. When we have the ability to stay constantly connected to a data stream, it is easy to lose focus on the here and now.

At the same time that technology is expanding the boundaries of our social circles, various media are also changing how we perceive and interact with each other. We don't only use Facebook to keep in touch with friends; we also use it to “like” certain television shows, products, or celebrities. Even television is no longer a one-way medium; it is an interactive one. We are encouraged to tweet, text, or call in to vote for contestants in everything from singing competitions to matchmaking endeavors—bridging the gap between our entertainment and our own lives.

These are some of the questions that interest sociologists. How might we examine these issues from a sociological perspective? A functionalist would probably focus on what social purposes technology and media serve. For example, the web is both a form of technology and of media, and it links individuals and nations in a communication network that facilitates both small family discussions and global trade networks. A functionalist would also be interested in the manifest functions of media and technology, as well as their role in social dysfunction. Someone applying the conflict perspective would probably focus on the systematic inequality created by differential access to media and technology. For example, how can middle-class U.S. citizens be sure the news they hear is an objective account of reality, unsullied by moneyed political interests? Someone applying the interactionist perspective to technology and the media might seek to understand the difference between the real lives we lead and the reality depicted on “reality” television shows, such as *The Bachelor*. Throughout this chapter, we will use our sociological imagination to explore how media and technology impact society.

## Technology Today

- Define technology and describe its evolution
- Understand technological inequality and issues related to unequal access to technology
- Describe the role of planned obsolescence in technological development



(a)



(b)



(c)



(d)



(e)



(f)

Technology is the application of science to address the problems of daily life, from hunting tools and agricultural advances, to manual and electronic ways of computing, to today's tablets and smartphones. (Photo (a) courtesy of Wikimedia Commons; Photo (b) courtesy of Martin Pettitt/flickr; Photo (c) courtesy of Whitefield d./flickr; Photo (d) courtesy of Andrew

Parnell/flickr; Photo (e) courtesy of  
Jemimus/flickr; Photo (f) courtesy  
of Kārlis Dambrāns/flickr)

## What Is Technology?

Although most people probably have in mind computers and cell phones when the subject of technology comes up, it is not merely a product of the modern era. **Fire** and stone tools, for example, were important technological developments during the Stone Age. Our ancestors, indeed, survived several ice ages owing to their ability to control fire. Fire functioned as heat, light, and protection from predators, and expanded the diet of early humans, such as seeds and dead bodies of frozen animals (Wrangham et al. 2010, p. 187).

Although there is no scrap of archeological evidence for Neanderthal **clothing**, the distinctive sloping wear on Neanderthal incisors may derive from their use as a vise to grip leather and sinews, perhaps during the curation of animal skins (ibid.). **Bone** needles have been found at 26,000 year-old sites in central Europe. **Buttons** made from bone or stone disks date to at least this time as well.

Way, way more recently, the **Agricultural Revolution** started. It is important to notice that it didn't start simultaneously in all human societies. Uniformly, however, if it started, it was based on a series of inventions of tools and systems that can till, thresh, plant, and harvest, all of which had been previously done by hand. As the farming methods became more efficient, surplus food could grow more, and so did the population. Social stratification became more clearly structured into caste or class systems or kingdom and feudalism, and so did inequalities among people.

The **Industrial Revolution** was initiated by Britain about 250 years ago that successfully controlled the "triangular trade" (see Ch. 5, Society and Social Interaction) involving Britain itself, its colonies in North America (or what we call today "the U.S."), and Africa. Most important technological

inventions that supported this revolution include steam engine and textile machine. The steam engine helped transport things and people way faster than before. The textile machine helped make cotton goods way more easily than before, and the cotton itself became the most important product for this revolution, supporting about a half of the U.S. economy (!). No wonder President Lincoln got upset when the southern States declared secession!!

The invention and improvement of **microchip** has tremendously innovated the computer and, thus, helped shift the mode of economy from the industrial (goods) to the postindustrial (services) among the core nations including, of course, the U.S. This is another revolution we humans now witness. Examples for this can be found everywhere, e.g., in your pocket (cellphone), on your desk (laptop computer), in your wallet (plastic cards with microchip), and so forth.

### Technological Inequality



Some schools sport cutting-edge computer labs, while others sport barbed wire. Is your academic technology at the cusp of innovation, relatively disadvantaged, or somewhere in

between? (Photo courtesy  
of Carlos Martinez/flickr)

As with any improvement to human society, not everyone has equal access. Technology, in particular, often creates changes that lead to ever greater inequalities. In short, the gap gets wider faster. This technological stratification has led to a new focus on ensuring better access for all.

Technological development creates technological stratification, or a **knowledge gap**, or digital divide among people mostly in two ways. First, a class-based knowledge gap grows between those who have less access to technology and those who have more access. Second, a usage-based gap grows between those who mainly choose intellectual websites and those who entirely choose 3 S's (sex, sports, and scandal) websites.

Either way, the technological development and the knowledge gap are positively related to one another, i.e., the more, the more. Before the Industrial Revolution where there was negligible technological development, indeed, almost all ordinary people were *equally* unthinking and uninformed.

The situation today is this. Personal **computer** use in the U.S. shifted dramatically from 300,000 users in 1991 to more than 10 million users by 1996 (Rappaport 2009). What happened was that Microsoft released Windows 95 in 1995. Right after that, the U.S. economy, which had been hitting new bottoms again and again, began rapidly recovering. President Bill Clinton took all the credits, proudly. But who contributed to this striking recovery was not *Bill* Clinton, but *Bill* Gates.

Now, the gap began growing between these 10 million users who got access to the Internet and those who didn't. Furthermore, within the 10 million users, the gap was also growing between users of thinking websites and those of unthinking ones. Politicians and the major media outlets love these 3 S's lovers; they are easily deceived.



Data from the Pew Research Center (2011) suggests the emergence of yet another divide. As technological devices get smaller and more mobile, larger percentages of minority groups (such as Latinos and African Americans) are using their **cellphone** to connect to the Internet. In fact, about 50% of people in these minority groups connect to the web via such devices, whereas only one-third of whites do (Washington 2011). And while it might seem that the Internet is the Internet, regardless of how you get there, there's a notable difference. Tasks like updating a résumé or filling out a job application are much harder on a cell phone than on a wired computer in the home. As a result, the digital divide might mean no access to computers or the Internet, but could mean access to the kind of online technology that allows for empowerment, not just entertainment (Washington 2011).

Mossberger, Tolbert, and Gilbert (2006) demonstrated that the majority of the digital divide for African Americans could be explained by demographic and community-level characteristics, such as socioeconomic status and geographic location. For the Latino population, ethnicity alone, regardless of economics or geography, seemed to limit technology use. Liff and Shepherd (2004) found that women, who are accessing technology shaped primarily by male users, feel less confident in their Internet skills and have less Internet access at both work and home. Finally, Guillén and Suárez (2005) found that the global digital divide resulted from both the economic and sociopolitical characteristics of countries.

## **Use of Technology and Social Media in Society by Individuals**

Do you own an e-reader or tablet? What about your parents or your friends? How often do you check social media or your cell phone? Does all this technology have a positive or negative impact on your life? When it comes to cell phones, 67% of users check their phones for messages or calls even when the phone wasn't ringing. In addition, "44% of cell owners have slept with their phone next to their bed because they wanted to make sure they didn't miss any calls, text messages, or other updates during the night and 29% of cell owners describe their cell phone as 'something they can't imagine living without'" (Smith 2012).

While people report that cell phones make it easier to stay in touch, simplify planning and scheduling their daily activities, and increase their productivity, that's not the only impact of increased cell phone ownership in the United States. Smith also reports that "roughly one in five cell owners say that their phone has made it at least somewhat harder to forget about work at home or on the weekends; to give people their undivided attention; or to focus on a single task without being distracted" (Smith 2012).

A new survey from the Pew Research Center reported that 73 percent of adults engage in some sort of social networking online. Facebook was the most popular platform, and both Facebook users and Instagram users check their sites on a daily basis. Over a third of users check their sites more than once a day (Duggan and Smith 2013).

## **Online Privacy and Security**

As we increase our footprints on the web by going online more often to connect socially, share material, conduct business, and store information, we also increase our vulnerability to those with criminal intent. The Pew Research Center recently published a report that indicated the number of Internet users who express concern over the extent of personal information about them available online jumped 17 percent between 2009 and 2013. In that same survey, 12 percent of respondents indicated they had been harassed online, and 11 percent indicated that personal information, such as their Social Security number, had been stolen (Rainie, Kiesler, Kang, and Madden 2013).

Online privacy and security is a key organizational concern as well. Recent large-scale data breaches at retailers such as Target, financial powerhouses such as JP Morgan, the government health insurance site Healthcare.gov, and cell phone providers such as Verizon, exposed millions of people to the threat of identity theft when hackers got access to personal information by compromising website security.

For example, in late August 2014, hackers breached the iCloud data storage site and promptly leaked wave after wave of nude photos from the private

accounts of actors such as Jennifer Lawrence and Kirsten Dunst (Lewis 2014). While large-scale data breaches that affect corporations and celebrities are more likely to make the news, individuals may put their personal information at risk simply by clicking a suspect link in an official sounding e-mail.

How can individuals protect their data? Numerous facts sheets available through the government, nonprofits, and the private sector outline common safety measures, including the following: become familiar with privacy rights; read privacy policies when making a purchase (rather than simply clicking “accept”); give out only the minimum information requested by any source; ask why information is being collected, how it is going to be used, and who will have access it; and monitor your credit history for red flags that indicate your identity has been compromised.

## **Net Neutrality**

The issue of **net neutrality**, the argument that all Internet data should be treated equally by Internet service providers, is part of the national debate. In reality, many major service providers (such as AT&T, Verizon, Comcast, etc.) manipulate their customers' accessibility to particular types of information and applications, if these can hinder their own profit. Arguing against this greedy corporate tendency, many insist that the Internet should be treated just like water, gas, and electricity whose providers don't manipulate the way they are served.

The other side of the debate holds that designating Internet service providers as common carriers would constitute a regulatory burden and limit the ability of telecommunication companies to operate profitably. Without profit motives, companies would not invest in making improvements to their Internet service or expanding those services to underserved areas. The final decision rests with the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and the federal government.

## **Summary**

Technology is the application of science to address the problems of daily life. The fast pace of technological advancement means the advancements are continuous, but that not everyone has equal access. The gap created by this unequal access has been termed the digital divide. The knowledge gap refers to an effect of the digital divide: the lack of knowledge or information that keeps those who were not exposed to technology from gaining marketable skills

## **Glossary**

digital divide

the uneven access to technology around race, class, and geographic lines

e-readiness

the ability to sort through, interpret, and process digital knowledge

knowledge gap

the gap in information that builds as groups grow up without access to technology

net neutrality

the principle that all Internet data should be treated equally by internet service providers

planned obsolescence

the act of a technology company planning for a product to be obsolete or unable from the time it's created

technology

the application of science to solve problems in daily life

## Media and Technology in Society

- Describe the evolution and current role of different media, like newspapers, television, and new media
- Understand the function of product advertising in media
- Demonstrate awareness of the social homogenization and social fragmentation that occur via modern society's use of technology and media



In the coming future, there is no doubt that robots are going to play a large role in all aspects of our lives.  
(Photo courtesy of shay sowden/flickr)

Technology and the media are interwoven, and neither can be separated from contemporary societies. A medium is a means to communication such as print, radio, television, and the Internet. The mass **media** (the plural form of "medium") refer to large-scale communication organizations that can address large numbers of people.

## What Are Patents, Trademarks, Servicemarks, and Copyrights?

The United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) is an agency of the U.S. Department of Commerce (USPTO 2015) working for so-called **intellectual property rights**. Its role is to grant patents for inventions, to register trademarks or servicemarks, and to protect copyrights of the authors of original works of authorship. Regarding "patents," first, there are three types: (1) utility, (2) design, and (3) plant.

1. **Utility patents** may be granted to anyone who invents or discovers any new and useful process, machine, article of manufacture, or composition of matter, or any new and useful improvement thereof.
2. **Design patents** may be granted to anyone who invents a new, original, and ornamental design for an article of manufacture.
3. **Plant patents** may be granted to anyone who invents or discovers and asexually reproduces any distinct and new variety of plant.

A **trademark** is a word, name, symbol, or device that is used in trade with goods to indicate the source of the goods and to distinguish them from the goods of others. A **servicemark** is the same as a trademark except that it identifies and distinguishes the source of a service rather than a product. The terms "trademark" and "mark" are commonly used to refer to both trademarks and servicemarks.

**Copyright** is a form of protection provided to the authors of "original works of authorship" including literary, dramatic, musical, artistic, and certain other intellectual works, both published and unpublished. The 1976 Copyright Act generally gives the owner of copyright the exclusive right to reproduce the copyrighted work, to prepare derivative works, to distribute copies or phonorecords of the copyrighted work, to perform the copyrighted work publicly, or to display the copyrighted work publicly.

## Criticisms of Intellectual Property Rights

**two major dangers**

The grant of power that comes with "intellectual property rights" carries two major dangers (Draho et al. 2002, p. 3; paraphrased). First, it justifies monopoly and can block the accessibility for the poor in need. Second, when a thing is patented, it hinders outsiders to join its research and, thus, its improvement.

### **not affordable to the poor in need**

Related to "the poor in need" above, for example, more than 95% of all HIV-infected people now live in the developing countries, which has likewise experienced 95% of all deaths from AIDS (UNAIDS/WHO 2000). Drugs that can treat HIV/AIDS have been developed, but they are patented and expensive, and thus are not affordable to the poor in need.

### **comes from rain forests and the farms and gardens of poor people in the third world**

Seed companies can demand a royalty for the use of patented seeds or chemicals in developing countries, demanding further that farmers pay royalties on seeds saved from the previous harvest (Schaeffer 1997, pp. 204-05). Under the new rules, "a farmer purchasing [patented] seed would have the right to grow the seed but not the right to make seed." Much of the raw material for new drugs, seeds, and chemicals comes from rain forests and the farms and gardens of poor people in developing countries. The "baseball" tomatoes sold in U.S. supermarkets are the result of cross-breeding tomato varieties taken from Latin American countries during the 1950s and '60s. "Yet none of these benefits have been shared with Peru, the original source of the genetic material." Most of Disney's major cartoon productions are based on fables and folklore originally told by people in other countries: e.g., The Little Mermaid, Beauty and the Beast, Cinderella, and Aladdin. But by copyrighting its own particular version (in words, music, and images), Disney can then sell these stories to people around the world and deny others the right to use them.

## **Types of Media and Technology**

Media and technology have evolved hand in hand, from early print to modern publications, from radio to film to television to... New media emerge constantly, such as those we see in the online world.

## Print Newspaper

Early forms of print media, found in ancient Rome, were hand-copied onto boards and carried around to keep the citizenry informed. With the invention of the printing press, the way that people shared ideas changed, as information could be mass produced and stored. For the first time, there was a way to spread knowledge and information more efficiently; many credit this development as leading to the Renaissance and ultimately the Age of Enlightenment. This is not to say that newspapers of old were more trustworthy than the *Weekly World News* and *National Enquirer* are today. Sensationalism abounded, as did censorship that forbade any subjects that would incite the populace.

The invention of the telegraph, in the mid-1800s, changed print media almost as much as the printing press. Suddenly information could be transmitted in minutes. As the nineteenth century became the twentieth, U.S. publishers such as Hearst redefined the world of print media and wielded an enormous amount of power to socially construct national and world events. Of course, even as the media empires of William Randolph Hearst and Joseph Pulitzer were growing, print media also allowed for the dissemination of countercultural or revolutionary materials. Internationally, Vladimir Lenin's *Irksa* (*The Spark*) newspaper was published in 1900 and played a role in Russia's growing communist movement (World Association of Newspapers 2004).

With the invention and widespread use of television in the mid-twentieth century, newspaper circulation steadily dropped off, and in the 21st century, circulation has dropped further as more people turn to internet news sites and other forms of new media to stay informed. According to the Pew Research Center, 2009 saw an unprecedented drop in newspaper circulation—down 10.6 percent from the year before (Pew 2010).

This shift away from newspapers as a source of information has profound effects on societies. When the news is given to a large diverse conglomerate of people, it must maintain some level of broad-based reporting and balance in order to appeal to a broad audience and keep them subscribing. As newspapers decline, news sources become more fractured, so each segment of the audience can choose specifically what it wants to hear and what it



wants to avoid. Increasingly, newspapers are shifting online in an attempt to remain relevant. It is hard to tell what impact new media platforms will have on the way we receive and process information.

Increasingly, newspapers are shifting online in an attempt to remain relevant. It is hard to tell what impact new media platforms will have on the way we receive and process information. The Pew Research Center's Project for Excellence in Journalism (2013) reported that audiences for all the major news magazines declined in 2012, though digital ad revenue increased. The same report suggested that, while newspaper circulation is holding steady at around \$10 billion after years of decline, it is digital pay plans that allow newspapers to keep their heads above water, and the digital ad revenue that is increasing for news magazines is not enough to compensate for print revenue loss in newspapers.

A 2014 report suggested that U.S. adults read a median of five books per year in 2013, which is about average. But are they reading traditional print or e-books? About 69 percent of people said they had read at least one printed book in the past year, versus 28 percent who said they'd read an e-book (DeSilver 2014). Is print more effective at conveying information? In recent study, Mangen, Walgermo, and Bronnick (2013) found that students who read on paper performed slightly better than those who read an e-book on an open-book reading comprehension exam of multiple-choice and short-answer questions. While a meta-analysis of research by Andrews (1992) seemed to confirm that people read more slowly and comprehend less when reading from screens, a meta-analysis of more recent research on this topic does not show anything definite (Noyes and Garland 2008).

## **Television and Radio**

Radio programming obviously preceded television, but both shaped people's lives in much the same way. In both cases, information (and entertainment) could be enjoyed at home, with a kind of immediacy and community that newspapers could not offer. For instance, many people in the United States might remember when they saw on television or heard on the radio that the Twin Towers in New York City had been attacked in 2001.

Even though people were in their own homes, media allowed them to share these moments in real time. This same kind of separate-but-communal approach occurred with entertainment too. School-aged children and office workers gathered to discuss the previous night's installment of a serial television or radio show.

Right up through the 1970s, U.S. television was dominated by three major networks (ABC, CBS, and NBC) that competed for ratings and advertising dollars. The networks also exerted a lot of control over what people watched. Public television, in contrast, offered an educational nonprofit alternative to the sensationalization of news spurred by the network competition for viewers and advertising dollars. Those sources—PBS (Public Broadcasting Service), the BBC (British Broadcasting Company), and CBC (Canadian Broadcasting Company)—garnered a worldwide reputation for high-quality programming and a global perspective. Al Jazeera, the Arabic independent news station, has joined this group as a similar media force that broadcasts to people worldwide.

The impact of television on U.S. society is hard to overstate. By the late 1990s, 98 percent of U.S. homes had at least one television set, and the average person watched between two and a half and five hours of television daily. All this television has a powerful socializing effect, providing reference groups while reinforcing social norms, values, and beliefs.

## **Film**

The film industry took off in the 1930s, when color and sound were first integrated into feature films. Like television, early films were unifying for society: as people gathered in theaters to watch new releases, they would laugh, cry, and be scared together. Movies also act as time capsules or cultural touchstones for society. From Westerns starring the tough-talking Clint Eastwood to the biopic of Facebook founder and Harvard dropout Mark Zuckerberg, movies illustrate society's dreams, fears, and experiences. While many consider Hollywood the epicenter of moviemaking, India's Bollywood actually produces more films per year, speaking to the cultural aspirations and norms of Indian society.

Increasingly, people are watching films online via Netflix, Hulu, Amazon, and other streaming services. While most streaming video companies keep their user data secret, Nielsen estimated that 38 percent of U.S. citizens accessed Netflix in 2013. In 2013, Google, Inc. reported that YouTube served 1 billion unique viewers every month—an impressive number, considering that it amounts to one-third of the estimated 3 billion accessing the Internet every month (Reuters 2013; International Telecommunication Union 2014).

## **New Media**



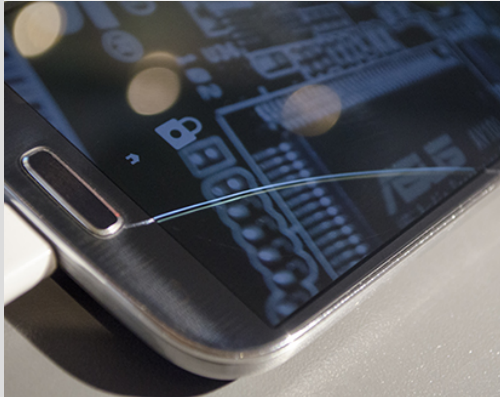
Netflix, one form of new media, exchanges information in the form of DVDs to users in the comfort of their own homes.  
(Photo courtesy of Marit & Toomas Hinnosaar/flickr)

**New media** encompasses all interactive forms of information exchange. These include social networking sites, blogs, podcasts, wikis, and virtual

worlds. Clearly, the list grows almost daily. However, there is no guarantee that the information offered is accurate. In fact, the immediacy of new media coupled with the lack of oversight means we must be more careful than ever to ensure our news is coming from accurate sources.

**Note:**

**Planned Obsolescence--Greedy Corporate Strategy**



People have trouble  
keeping up with  
technological innovation.  
But people may not be to  
blame, as manufacturers  
intentionally develop  
products with short life  
spans. (Photo courtesy of  
Mathias F.  
Svendsen/flickr)

Chances are your mobile phone company, as well as the makers of your laptop and your household appliances, are all counting on their products to fail. Not too quickly, of course, or consumers wouldn't stand for it—but frequently enough that you might find that it costs far more to fix a device than to replace it with a newer model. This strategy is called **planned obsolescence**, and it is the business practice of planning for a product to be

obsolete or unusable from the time it is created. This greedy corporate strategy yields tons of so-call "e-waste," a dangerous form of garbage--which will be discussed in Ch. 19.

Those who use Microsoft Windows might feel that like the women who purchased endless pairs of stockings, they are victims of planned obsolescence. Every time Windows releases a new operating system, there are typically not many innovations in it that consumers feel they must have. However, the software programs are upwardly compatible only. This means that while the new versions can read older files, the old version cannot read the newer ones. In short order, those who have not upgraded right away find themselves unable to open files sent by colleagues or friends, and they usually wind up upgrading as well. Or how many times did Apple upgrade its iPhone so far?

## **Product Advertising**

Companies use advertising to sell to us, but the way they reach us is changing. Naomi Klein identified the destructive impact of corporate branding her 1999 text, *No Logo*, an antiglobalization treatise that focused on sweatshops, corporate power, and anticonsumerist social movements. In the post-millennial society, synergistic advertising practices ensure you are receiving the same message from a variety of sources and on a variety of platforms. For example, you may see billboards for Miller beer on your way to a stadium, sit down to watch a game preceded by a Miller commercial on the big screen, and watch a halftime ad in which people are shown holding up the trademark bottles. Chances are you can guess which brand of beer is for sale at the concession stand.

Advertising has changed, as technology and media have allowed consumers to bypass traditional advertising venues. From the invention of the remote control, which allows us to skip television advertising without leaving our seats, to recording devices that let us watch programs but skip the ads, conventional television advertising is on the wane. And print media is no different. Advertising revenue in newspapers and on television fell

significantly in 2009, which shows that companies need new ways of getting their messages to consumers.

One model companies are considering to address this advertising downturn uses the same philosophy as celebrity endorsements, just on a different scale. Companies are hiring college students to be their on-campus representatives, and they are looking for popular students engaged in high-profile activities like sports, fraternities, and music. The marketing team is betting that if we buy perfume because Beyoncé tells us to, we'll also choose our cell phone or smoothie brand if a popular student encourages that choice. According to an article in the *New York Times*, fall semester 2011 saw an estimated 10,000 U.S. college students working on campus as brand ambassadors for products from Red Bull energy drinks to Hewlett-Packard computers (Singer 2011). As the companies figure it, college students will trust one source of information above all: other students.

## **Homogenization and Fragmentation**

Despite the variety of media at hand, the mainstream news and entertainment you enjoy are increasingly homogenized. Research by McManus (1995) suggests that different news outlets all tell the same stories, using the same sources, resulting in the same message, presented with only slight variations. So whether you are reading the *New York Times* or the CNN's web site, the coverage of national events like a major court case or political issue will likely be the same.

Simultaneously with this homogenization among the major news outlets, the opposite process is occurring in the newer media streams. With so many choices, people increasingly customize their news experience, minimizing their opportunity to encounter information that does not jive with their worldview (Prior 2005). For instance, those who are staunchly Republican can avoid centrist or liberal-leaning cable news shows and web sites that would show Democrats in a favorable light. They know to seek out Fox News over MSNBC, just as Democrats know to do the opposite. Further, people who want to avoid politics completely can choose to visit web sites that deal only with entertainment or that will keep them up to date on sports

scores. They have an easy way to avoid information they do not wish to hear.

## Summary

Media and technology have been interwoven from the earliest days of human communication. The printing press, the telegraph, and the Internet are all examples of their intersection. Mass media have allowed for more shared social experiences, but new media now create a seemingly endless amount of airtime for any and every voice that wants to be heard.

Advertising has also changed with technology. New media allow consumers to bypass traditional advertising venues and cause companies to be more innovative and intrusive as they try to gain our attention.

## Further Research

To get a sense of the timeline of technology, check out this web site:

[http://openstaxcollege.org/l/Tech\\_History](http://openstaxcollege.org/l/Tech_History)

To learn more about new media, click here:

[http://openstaxcollege.org/l/new\\_media](http://openstaxcollege.org/l/new_media)

To understand how independent media coverage differs from major corporate affiliated news outlets, review material from the Democracy Now! website: <http://openstaxcollege.org/l/2EDemoNow>

## References

Anderson, C.A., and B.J. Bushman. 2001. "Effects of Violent Video Games on Aggressive Behavior, Aggressive Cognition, Aggressive Affect, Physiological Arousal, and Prosocial Behavior: A Meta-Analytic Review of the Scientific Literature." *Psychological Science* 12:353–359.

Anderson, Craig. 2003. "Violent Video Games: Myths, Facts and Unanswered Questions." *American Psychological Association*, October.

Retrieved January 13, 2012

(<http://www.apa.org/science/about/psa/2003/10/anderson.aspx>).

Dillon, Andrew. 1992. "Reading From Paper Versus Screens: A Critical Review of the Empirical Literature." *Ergonomics* 35(10): 1297–1326.

DeSilver, Drew. 2014. "Overall Book Readership Stable, But e-Books Becoming More Popular." Pew Research Center. Retrieved December 5, 2014 (<http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/01/21/overall-book-readership-stable-but-e-books-becoming-more-popular/>).

Drahos, Peter and John Braithwaite. *Intellectual Feudalism*. London: Earthscan.

Duggan, Maeve, and Aaron Smith. "Social Media Update 2013." Pew Research Centers Internet American Life Project RSS. Pew Research Center. Retrieved October 2, 2014 (<http://www.pewinternet.org/2013/12/30/social-media-update-2013/>).

International Telecommunication Unions. 2014. "The World in 2014: ICT Facts and Figures." United Nations. Retrieved December 5, 2014 (<http://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Statistics/Documents/facts/ICTFactsFigures2014-e.pdf>).

Jansen, Jim. "Use of the Internet in Higher-income Households." Pew Research Centers Internet American Life Project RSS. Pew Research Center. Retrieved October 1, 2014 (<http://www.pewinternet.org/2010/11/24/use-of-the-internet-in-higher-income-households>).

Kumar, Ravi. 2014. "Social Media and Social Change: How Young People Are Tapping into Technology." Youthink! N.p. Retrieved October 3, 2014 (<http://blogs.worldbank.org/youthink/social-media-and-social-change-how-young-people-are-tapping-technology>).

Lievrouw, Leah A., and Sonia Livingstone, eds. 2006. *Handbook of New Media: Social Shaping and Social Consequences*. London : SAGE Publications.



McManus, John. 1995. "A Market-Based Model of News Production." *Communication Theory* 5:301–338.

Mangen, A., B.R. Walgermo, and K. Bronnick. 2013. "Reading Linear Texts on Paper Versus Computer Screen: Effects on Reading Comprehension." *International Journal of Educational Research* 58 :61–68.

Nielsen. 2013. "'Bingeing' in the New Viewing for Over-the-Top-Streamers." Retrieved December 5, 2014 (<http://www.nielsen.com/us/en/insights/news/2013/binging-is-the-new-viewing-for-over-the-top-streamers.html>).

Noyes, Jan, and Kate J. Garland. 2008. "Computer- Vs. Paper-Based Tasks: Are They Equivalent?" *Ergonomics* 51(9): 1352–1375.

Pew Research Center. 2010. "State of the News Media 2010." *Pew Research Center Publications*, March 15. Retrieved January 24, 2012 (<http://pewresearch.org/pubs/1523/state-of-the-news-media-2010>).

Pew Research Center's Project for Excellence in Journalism. 2013. "The State of the News Media 2013." *Pew Research Center Publications*. Retrieved December 5, 2014 (<http://www.stateofthemediamedia.org/2013/overview-5/key-findings/>).

Prior, Markus. 2005. "News vs. Entertainment: How Increasing Media Choice Widens Gaps in Political Knowledge and Turnout." *American Journal of Political Science* 49(3):577–592.

ProCon. 2012. "Video Games." January 5. Retrieved January 12, 2012 (<http://videogames.procon.org/>).

Reuters. 2013. "YouTube Stats: Site Has 1 Billion Active Users Each Month." *Huffington Post*. Retrieved December 5, 2014 ([http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/03/21/youtube-stats\\_n\\_2922543.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/03/21/youtube-stats_n_2922543.html)).

Schaeffer, Robert K. 1997. *Understanding Globalization: The Social Consequences of Political, Economic, and Environmental Change*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

Singer, Natasha. 2011. "On Campus, It's One Big Commercial." *New York Times*, September 10. Retrieved February 10, 2012 (<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/11/business/at-colleges-the-marketers-are-everywhere.html?pagewanted=1&r=1&ref=education>).

Smith, Aaron. 2012. "The Best (and Worst) of Mobile Connectivity." Pew Research Centers Internet American Life Project RSS. *Pew Research Center*. Retrieved October 3, 2014 (<http://www.pewinternet.org/2012/11/30/the-best-and-worst-of-mobile-connectivity/>).

Smith, Aaron. 2014a. "African Americans and Technology Use." Pew Research Centers Internet American Life Project RSS. *Pew Research Center*. Retrieved October 1, 2014 (<http://www.pewinternet.org/2014/01/06/african-americans-and-technology-use/>).

Smith, Aaron. 2014b. "Older Adults and Technology Use." Pew Research Centers Internet American Life Project RSS. *Pew Research Center*. Retrieved October 2, 2014 (<http://www.pewinternet.org/2014/04/03/older-adults-and-technology-use/>).

UNAIDS/WHO. 2000. "Patent Situation of HIV/AIDS-Related Drugs in 80 Countries" (<http://www.who.int/3by5/en/patentshivdrugs.pdf>).

United States Patent and Trademark Office. 2012. "General Information Concerning Patents." Retrieved January 12, 2012 ([http://www.uspto.gov/patents/resources/general\\_info\\_concerning\\_patents.jsp](http://www.uspto.gov/patents/resources/general_info_concerning_patents.jsp)).

van de Donk, W., B.D. Loader, P.G. Nixon, and D. Rucht, eds. 2004. *Cyberprotest: New Media, Citizens, and Social Movements*. New York: Routledge.

World Association of Newspapers. 2004. "Newspapers: A Brief History."  
Retrieved January 12, 2012 ([http://www.wan-press.org/article.php?id\\_article=2821](http://www.wan-press.org/article.php?id_article=2821)).

## **Glossary**

### **design patents**

patents that are granted when someone has invented a new and original design for a manufactured product

### **evolutionary model of technological change**

a breakthrough in one form of technology that leads to a number of variations, from which a prototype emerges, followed by a period of slight adjustments to the technology, interrupted by a breakthrough

### **media**

all print, digital, and electronic means of communication

### **new media**

all interactive forms of information exchange

### **plant patents**

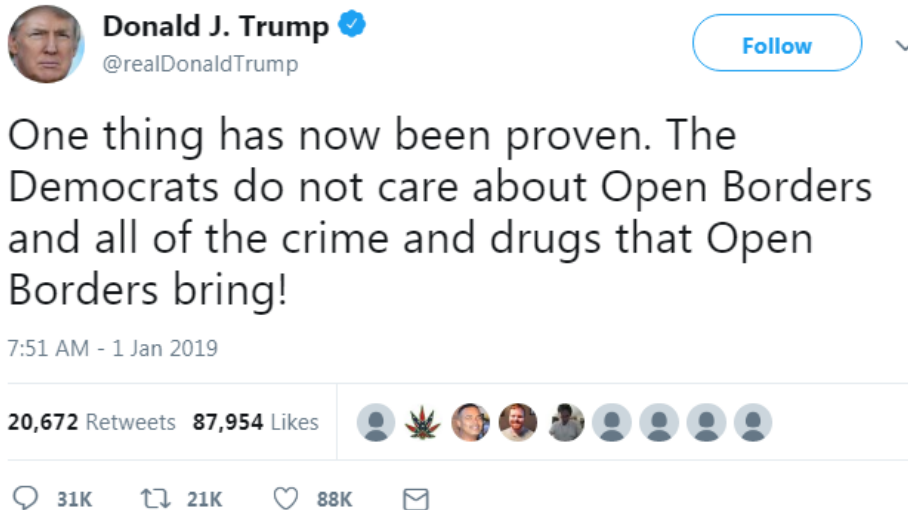
patents that recognize the discovery of new plant types that can be asexually reproduced

### **utility patents**

patents that are granted for the invention or discovery of any new and useful process, product, or machine

## Global Implications of Media and Technology

- Explain the advantages and concerns of media globalization
- Understand the globalization of technology



Twitter is utilized on the political stage.

Technology, and increasingly media, has always driven globalization. In a landmark book, Thomas Friedman (2005), identified several ways in which technology “flattened” the globe and contributed to our global economy. The first edition of *The World Is Flat*, written in 2005, posits that core economic concepts were changed by personal computing and high-speed Internet. Access to these two technological shifts has allowed core-nation corporations to recruit workers in call centers located in China or India.

Of course not everyone agrees with Friedman’s theory. Many economists pointed out that in reality, innovation, economic activity, and population still gather in geographically attractive areas, and they continue to create economic peaks and valleys, which are by no means flattened out to mean equality for all. China’s hugely innovative and powerful cities of Shanghai and Beijing, for example, are worlds away from the rural squalor of the country’s poorest denizens.

Friedman is an economist, not a sociologist. His work focuses on the economic gains and risks this new world order entails. In this section, we will look more closely at how media globalization and technological globalization play out in a sociological perspective. As the names suggest, **media globalization** is the worldwide integration of media through the cross-cultural exchange of ideas, while **technological globalization** refers to the cross-cultural development and exchange of technology.

## Media Consolidation

In the U.S., there are about 1,500 newspapers, 2,600 book publishers, and an equal number of television stations, plus 6,000 magazines and a whopping 10,000 radio outlets (Bagdikian 2004).

On the surface, there is endless opportunity to find diverse media outlets. However, the numbers are misleading. What's going on is **media consolidation**, a process in which fewer and fewer owners control the majority of media outlets. This creates an **oligopoly** in which a few firms dominate the media marketplace. In the U.S. today, a small number of super rich predators, like Rockefeller, Rothschild, Bronfman, Newhouse, Murdoch, and Redstone, monopolize the U.S. major media outlets that include: ABC, CBS, NBC, CNN, Time, Newsweek, U.S. News & World Report, The New York Times, The Washington Post, The Los Angeles Times, The Chicago Tribune... according to *The Global Movement*.



Courtesy of *The Global Movement* < <http://www.theglobalmovement.info/wp/areas-of-focus/global-financial-war/who-controls-the-media>>.

Media consolidation results in **gatekeeping**, the manipulation of the information, and it is **oligopoly**, a market structure in which a few firms can control things for themselves rather than for their customers. Many observe, indeed, that consolidated media represent the political interests of the power elite, biasing or even hiding facts. President Trump who is hated by them and who, in turn, angrily labels the U.S. media "fake news" may be penetrating this. Also, in an oligopoly, the firms don't have to bother to innovate, improve services, or lower prices. Did you know that watching TV used to be free entirely, just like listening to the radio? Today how much do people pay for that?

## Summary

Technology drives globalization, but what that means can be hard to decipher. While some economists see technological advances leading to a more level playing field where anyone anywhere can be a global contender, the reality is that opportunity still clusters in geographically advantaged areas. Still, technological diffusion has led to the spread of more and more technology across borders into peripheral and semi-peripheral nations. However, true technological global equality is a long way off.

## Further Research

Check out more on the global digital divide here:  
[http://openstaxcollege.org/l/Global\\_Digital\\_Divide](http://openstaxcollege.org/l/Global_Digital_Divide)

The Global Movement. "Who Controls the Media."  
(<http://www.theglobalmovement.info/wp/areas-of-focus/global-financial-war/who-controls-the-media>).

## References

Acker, Jenny C., and Isaac M. Mbiti. 2010. "Mobile Phones and Economic Development in Africa." *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 24(3):207–232. Retrieved January 12, 2012  
([link](http://pubs.aeaweb.org/doi/pdf/10.1257/jep.24.3.207)pubs.aeaweb.org/doi/pdf/10.1257/jep.24.3.207).

Bagdikian, Ben H. 2004. *The New Media Monopoly*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press Books.

Friedman, Thomas. 2005. *The World Is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century*. New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux.

The Global Movement. "Who Controls the Media?"  
(<http://www.theglobalmovement.info/wp/areas-of-focus/global-financial-war/who-controls-the-media>).

Jan, Mirza. 2009. "Globalization of Media: Key Issues and Dimensions." *European Journal of Scientific Research* 29:66–75.

Ma, Damien. 2011. "2011: When Chinese Social Media Found Its Legs." *The Atlantic*, December 18. Retrieved January 15, 2012  
(<http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2011/12/2011-when-chinese-social-media-found-its-legs/250083/>).

## Glossary

media consolidation

a process by which fewer and fewer owners control the majority of media outlets

media globalization

the worldwide integration of media through the cross-cultural exchange of ideas

oligopoly

a situation in which a few firms dominate a marketplace

technological diffusion

the spread of technology across borders

technological globalization

the cross-cultural development and exchange of technology

## Theoretical Perspectives on Media and Technology

- Understand and discuss how we analyze media and technology through various sociological perspectives

In this section presented are theoretical perspectives on media and technology based on the major theoretical paradigms: functionalism, conflict theory, feminism, and symbolic interactionism.

### **Functionalism**

Because functionalism focuses on how media and technology contribute to the smooth functioning of society, a good place to begin understanding this perspective is to write a list of functions you perceive media and technology to perform. Your list might include the ability to find information on the Internet, television's entertainment value, or how advertising and product placement contribute to social norms.

### **Commercial Function**





TV commercials can carry significant cultural currency. For some, the ads during the Super Bowl are more water cooler-worthy than the game itself. (Photo courtesy of Dennis Yang/flickr)

As you might guess, with nearly every U.S. household possessing a television, and the 250 billion hours of television watched annually by people in the United States, companies that wish to connect with consumers find television an irresistible platform to promote their goods and services (Nielsen 2012). Television advertising is a highly functional way to meet a market demographic where it lives. Sponsors can use the sophisticated data gathered by network and cable television companies regarding their viewers and target their advertising accordingly. Whether you are watching cartoons

on Nick Jr. or a cooking show on Telemundo, chances are advertisers have a plan to reach you.

And it certainly doesn't stop with television. Commercial advertising precedes movies in theaters and shows up on and inside public transportation, as well as on the sides of building and roadways. Major corporations such as Coca-Cola bring their advertising into public schools, by sponsoring sports fields or tournaments, as well as filling the halls and cafeterias of those schools with vending machines hawking their goods. With rising concerns about childhood obesity and attendant diseases, the era of soda machines in schools may be numbered. In fact, as part of the United States Department of Agriculture's Healthy, Hunger Free Kids Act and Michelle Obama's Let's Move! Initiative, a ban on junk food in school began in July 2014.

### **Entertainment Function**

An obvious manifest function of media is its entertainment value. Most people, when asked why they watch television or go to the movies, would answer that they enjoy it. And the numbers certainly illustrate that. While 2012 Nielsen research shows a slight reduction of U.S. homes with televisions, the reach of television is still vast. And the amount of time spent watching is equally large. Clearly, enjoyment is paramount. On the technology side, as well, there is a clear entertainment factor to the use of new innovations. From online gaming to chatting with friends on Facebook, technology offers new and more exciting ways for people to entertain themselves.

### **Social Norm Functions**

Even while the media is selling us goods and entertaining us, it also serves to socialize us, helping us pass along norms, values, and beliefs to the next generation. In fact, we are socialized and resocialized by media throughout our whole lives. All forms of media teach us what is good and desirable,

how we should speak, how we should behave, and how we should react to events. Media also provide us with cultural touchstones during events of national significance. How many of your older relatives can recall watching the explosion of the space shuttle *Challenger* on television? How many of those reading this textbook followed the events of September 11 or Hurricane Katrina on television or the Internet?

Just as in Anderson and Bushman's (2011) evidence in the Violence in Media and Video Games: Does It Matter? feature, debate still exists over the extent and impact of media socialization. One recent study (Krahe et al. 2011) demonstrated that violent media content does have a desensitizing affect and is correlated with aggressive thoughts. Another group of scholars (Gentile, Mathieson, and Crick 2011) found that among children exposure to media violence led to an increase in both physical and relational aggression. Yet, a meta-analysis study covering four decades of research (Savage 2003) could not establish a definitive link between viewing violence and committing criminal violence.

It is clear from watching people emulate the styles of dress and talk that appear in media that media has a socializing influence. What is not clear, despite nearly fifty years of empirical research, is how much socializing influence the media has when compared to other agents of socialization, which include any social institution that passes along norms, values, and beliefs (such as peers, family, religious institutions, and the like).

## **Life-Changing Functions**

Like media, many forms of technology do indeed entertain us, provide a venue for commercialization, and socialize us. For example, some studies suggest the rising obesity rate is correlated with the decrease in physical activity caused by an increase in use of some forms of technology, a latent function of the prevalence of media in society (Kautiainen et al. 2011). Without a doubt, a manifest function of technology is to change our lives, sometimes for the better and sometimes for the worse. Think of how the digital age has improved the ways we communicate. Have you ever used Skype or another webcast to talk to a friend or family member far away? Or

maybe you have organized a fund drive, raising thousands of dollars, all from your desk chair.

Of course, the downside to this ongoing information flow is the near impossibility of disconnecting from technology that leads to an expectation of constant convenient access to information and people. Such a fast-paced dynamic is not always to our benefit. Some sociologists assert that this level of media exposure leads to **narcotizing dysfunction**, a result in which people are too overwhelmed with media input to really care about the issue, so their involvement becomes defined by awareness instead of by action (Lazerfeld and Merton 1948).

## **Conflict Perspective**

In contrast to theories in the functional perspective, the conflict perspective focuses on the creation and reproduction of inequality—social processes that tend to disrupt society rather than contribute to its smooth operation. When we take a conflict perspective, one major focus is the differential access to media and technology embodied in the digital divide. Conflict theorists also look at who controls the media, and how media promotes the norms of upper-middle-class white people in the United States while minimizing the presence of the working class, especially people of color.

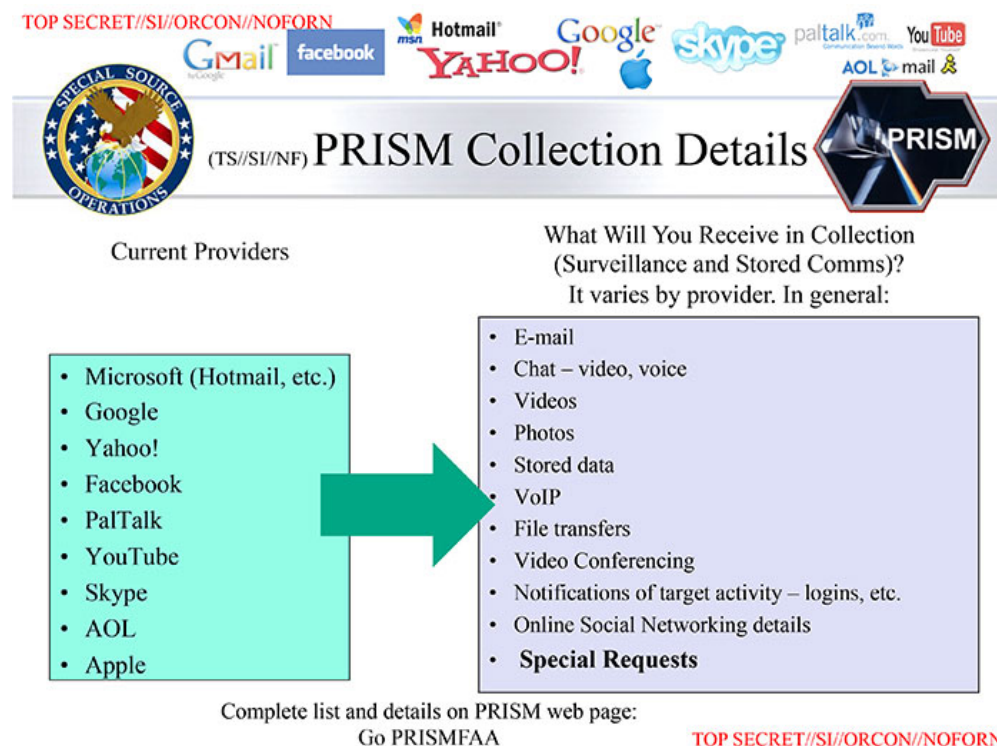
## **Control of Media and Technology**

Powerful individuals and social institutions have a great deal of influence over which forms of technology are released, when and where they are released, and what kind of media is available for our consumption, which is a form of aforementioned "gatekeeping," a result of media consolidation. The people in charge of the media decide what the public is exposed to, which, as C. Wright Mills (1956) famously noted, is the heart of media's power.

## **Technological Social Control and Digital Surveillance**

Social scientists take the idea of the surveillance society so seriously that there is an entire journal devoted to its study, *Surveillance and Society*. The **panoptic surveillance**, "all-inclusive investigation" by the all-powerful, all-seeing government, is quietly spread in the form of technology used to monitor our every move. Owing to the 9/11 terrorist attacks in 2001, the U.S. government can easily justify "panoptic surveillance." Today, digital security cameras capture our movements, observers can track us through our cell phones, and police forces around the world use facial-recognition software.

In addition, according to *The Guardian* (Jun 7, 2013), a section of the U.S. government, called the National Security Agency (NSA), gets help from giant social media firms, namely, Google, Facebook, Apple, and so on. The NSA access is part of a previously undisclosed program called Prism, which allows officials to collect material including search history, the content of emails, file transfers, and live chats (see below).



In reaction, many, if not most, Americans accept this as an effective strategy to fight war on terrorism. The logic behind this is: "If it keeps us

safe, I'm okay with it"; or "If you're not doing anything wrong, you've got nothing to hide." Really?

Here's what Edward Snowden, a former NSA agent who revealed what the NSA had been doing, in a video interview with *Democracy Now* (2013), said:

Even if you're not doing anything wrong you're being watched and recorded... It's getting to the point you don't have to have done anything wrong, you simply have to eventually fall under suspicion from somebody--even by a wrong call--and then they can use the system to go back in time and scrutinize every decision you've ever made, every friend you've ever discussed something with, and attack you on that basis to sort of derive suspicion from an innocent life and paint anyone in the context of a wrongdoer.

Director of National Intelligence James Clapper, lied to Congress when he was asked by Senator Ron Wyden: "Does the NSA collect any type of data at all on hundreds of millions of Americans?" (Greenwald 2014, p. 30) Clapper's reply was as succinct as it was dishonest: "No, sir."

Panoptic surveillance is said to have become brisk under the Bush administration. To be noted, however, James Clapper was working under the Obama (not Bush) administration, which further deepened the surveillance. A journalist, who helped Edward Snowden reveal what the NSA had been doing, argues that President Obama, who campaigned on a vow to have the "most transparent administration in history," does exactly the opposite (Greenwald 2014, p. 50).

## **Feminist Perspective**



What types of women are we exposed to in the media? Some would argue that the range of female images is misleadingly narrow. (Photo courtesy of Cliff1066/flickr)

Take a look at popular television shows, advertising campaigns, and online game sites. In most, women are portrayed in a particular set of parameters and tend to have a uniform look that society recognizes as attractive. Most are thin, white or light-skinned, beautiful, and young. Why does this matter? Feminist perspective theorists believe this idealized image is crucial in creating and reinforcing stereotypes. For example, Fox and Bailenson (2009) found that online female avatars conforming to gender stereotypes enhance negative attitudes toward women, and Brasted (2010) found that media (advertising in particular) promotes gender stereotypes. As early as

1990, *Ms.* magazine instituted a policy to publish without any commercial advertising.

The gender gap in tech-related fields (science, technology, engineering, and math) is no secret. A 2011 U.S. Department of Commerce Report suggested that gender stereotyping is one reason for this gap which acknowledges the bias toward men as keepers of technological knowledge (US Department of Commerce 2011). But gender stereotypes go far beyond the use of technology. Press coverage in the media reinforces stereotypes that subordinate women; it gives airtime to looks over skills, and coverage disparages women who defy accepted norms.

Recent research in new media has offered a mixed picture of its potential to equalize the status of men and women in the arenas of technology and public discourse. A European agency, the Advisory Committee on Equal Opportunities for Men and Women (2010), issued an opinion report suggesting that while there is the potential for new media forms to perpetuate gender stereotypes and the gender gap in technology and media access, at the same time new media could offer alternative forums for feminist groups and the exchange of feminist ideas. Still, the committee warned against the relatively unregulated environment of new media and the potential for antifeminist activities, from pornography to human trafficking, to flourish there.

Increasingly prominent in the discussion of new media and feminism is **cyberfeminism**, the application to, and promotion of, feminism online. Research on cyberfeminism runs the gamut from the liberating use of blogs by women living in Iraq during the second Gulf War (Peirce 2011) to an investigation of the Suicide Girls web site (Magnet 2007).

## **Symbolic Interactionism**

Technology itself may act as a symbol for many. The kind of computer you own, the kind of car you drive, your ability to afford the latest Apple product—these serve as a social indicator of wealth and status. **Neo-Luddites** are people who see technology as symbolizing the coldness and alienation of modern life. But for **technophiles**, technology symbolizes the



potential for a brighter future. For those adopting an ideological middle ground, technology might symbolize status (in the form of a massive flat-screen television) or failure (ownership of a basic old mobile phone with no bells or whistles).

## **Social Construction of Reality**

The media create and spread symbols that become the basis for our shared understanding of society. Symbolic interactionists focus on this social construction of reality, an ongoing process in which people subjectively create and understand reality. Media constructs our reality in numerous ways. For some, people on TV can become their primary groups. For many others, the media present reference groups, whose statuses they long for, or with whom they try to identify.

## **Social Networking and Social Construction**

While Tumblr and Facebook encourage us to check in and provide details of our day through online social networks, corporations can just as easily promote their products on these sites. Even supposedly crowd-sourced sites like Yelp (which aggregates local reviews) are not immune to corporate shenanigans. That is, we think we are reading objective observations when in reality we may be buying into another form of advertising.

Facebook, which started as a free social network for college students, is increasingly a monetized business, selling you goods and services in subtle ways. But chances are you don't think of Facebook as one big online advertisement. What started out as a symbol of coolness and insider status, unavailable to parents and corporate shills, now promotes consumerism in the form of games and fandom. For example, think of all the money spent to upgrade popular Facebook games like Candy Crush. And notice that whenever you become a "fan," you likely receive product updates and special deals that promote online and real-world consumerism. It is unlikely that millions of people want to be "friends" with Pampers. But if it means a

weekly coupon, they will, in essence, rent out space on their Facebook pages for Pampers to appear. Thus, we develop both new ways to spend money and brand loyalties that will last even after Facebook is considered outdated and obsolete.

## Summary

There are myriad theories about how society, technology, and media will progress. Functionalism sees the contribution that technology and media provide to the stability of society, from facilitating leisure time to increasing productivity. Conflict theorists are more concerned with how technology reinforces inequalities among communities, both within and among countries. They also look at how media typically give voice to the most powerful, and how new media might offer tools to help those who are disenfranchised. Symbolic interactionists see the symbolic uses of technology as signs of everything from a sterile futuristic world to a successful professional life.

## Further Research

To learn more about cyberfeminism, check out the interdisciplinary artist collective, subRosa: <http://openstaxcollege.org/l/cyberfeminism>

To explore the implications of panoptic surveillance, review some surveillance studies at the free, open source Surveillance and Society site: <http://openstaxcollege.org/l/Surveillance>

Read an example of socialist media from *Jacobin* magazine here: <http://openstaxcollege.org/l/2EJacobin>

## References

Brasted, Monica. 2010. "Care Bears vs. Transformers: Gender Stereotypes in Advertisements." Retrieved January 10, 2012 (<http://www.sociology.org/media-studies/care-bears-vs-transformers-gender-stereotypes-in-advertisements>).

Carmi, Evan, Matthew Ericson, David Nolen, Kevin Quealy, Michael Strickland, Jeremy White, and Derek Willis. 2012. "The 2012 Money Race: Compare the Candidates." *New York Times*. Retrieved January 15, 2012 (<http://elections.nytimes.com/2012/campaign-finance>).

Democracy Now. 2013. "'You're Being Watched': Edward Snowden Emerges as Source Behind Explosive Revelations of NSA Spying." ([https://www.democracynow.org/2013/6/10/youre\\_being\\_watched\\_edward\\_snowden\\_emerges](https://www.democracynow.org/2013/6/10/youre_being_watched_edward_snowden_emerges)).

Foucault, Michel. 1975. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. New York: Vintage Books.

Fox, Jesse, and Jeremy Bailenson. 2009. "Virtual Virgins and Vamps: The Effects of Exposure to Female Characters' Sexualized Appearance and Gaze in an Immersive Virtual Environment." *Sex Roles* 61:147–157.

Gentile, Douglas, Lindsay Mathieson, and Nikki Crick. 2011. "Media Violence Associations with the Form and Function of Aggression among Elementary School Children." *Social Development* 20:213–232.

The Guardian. 2013. "NSA Prism program taps in to user data of Apple, Google and others." Jun 7.

Kautiainen, S., L. Koivusilta, T. Lintonen, S. M. Virtanen, and A. Rimpelä. 2005. "Use of Information and Communication Technology and Prevalence of Overweight and Obesity Among Adolescents." *International Journal of Obesity* 29:925–933

Krahe, Barbara, Ingrid Moller, L. Huesmann, Lucyna Kirwil, Julianec Felber, and Anja Berger. 2011. "Desensitization to Media Violence: Links With Habitual Media Violence

Exposure, Aggressive Cognitions, and Aggressive Behavior." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 100:630–646.

Greenwald, Glenn. 2014. *No Place to Hide: Edward Snowden, the NSA, and the U.S. Surveillance State*. New York: Metropolitan Books.

Lazerfeld, Paul F. and Robert K. Merton. 1948. "Mass Communication, Popular Taste, and Organized Social Action." *The Communication of Ideas*. New York: Harper & Bros.

Magnet, Shoshana. 2007. "Feminist Sexualities, Race, and The Internet: An Investigation of suicidegirls.com." *New Media & Society* 9:577-602.

Mills, C. Wright. 2000 [1956]. *The Power Elite*. New York: Oxford University Press.

NielsenWire. 2011. "Nielsen Estimates Number of U.S. Television Homes to be 114.7 Million." May 3. Retrieved January 15, 2012 ([http://blog.nielsen.com/nielsenwire/media\\_entertainment/nielsen-estimates-number-of-u-s-television-homes-to-be-114-7-million/](http://blog.nielsen.com/nielsenwire/media_entertainment/nielsen-estimates-number-of-u-s-television-homes-to-be-114-7-million/)).

Pierce, Tess. 2011. "Singing at the Digital Well: Blogs as Cyberfeminist Sites of Resistance." *Feminist Formations* 23:196–209.

Savage, Joanne. 2003. "Does Viewing Violent Media Really Cause Criminal Violence?

A Methodological Review." *Aggression and Violent Behavior* 10:99–128.

U.S. Department of Commerce. 2011. "Women in STEM: A Gender Gap to Innovation." August. Retrieved February 22, 2012 (<http://www.esa.doc.gov/sites/default/files/reports/documents/womeninstemagaptoinnovation8311.pdf/>).

## Glossary

cyberfeminism

the application to and promotion of feminism online

gatekeeping

the sorting process by which thousands of possible messages are shaped into a mass media-appropriate form and reduced to a manageable amount

neo-Luddites

those who see technology as a symbol of the coldness of modern life

panoptic surveillance

a form of constant monitoring in which the observation posts are decentralized and the observed is never communicated with directly

technophiles

those who see technology as symbolizing the potential for a brighter future

## Introduction to Social Stratification in the United States

class="introduction"

This house,  
formerly  
owned by the  
famous  
television  
producer,  
Aaron  
Spelling, was  
for a time  
listed for \$150  
million  
dollars. It is  
considered  
one of the  
most  
extravagant  
homes in the  
United States,  
and is a  
testament to  
the wealth  
generated in  
some  
industries.  
(Photo  
courtesy of  
Atwater  
Village  
Newbie/flickr  
)



Aaron grew up on a farm in rural Ohio, left home to serve in the Army, and returned a few years later to take over the family farm. He moved into the same house he had grown up in and soon married a young woman with whom he had attended high school. As they began to have children, they quickly realized that the income from the farm was no longer sufficient to meet their needs. Aaron, with little experience beyond the farm, accepted a job as a clerk at a local grocery store. It was there that his life and the lives of his wife and children were changed forever.

One of the managers at the store liked Aaron, his attitude, and his work ethic. He took Aaron under his wing and began to groom him for advancement at the store. Aaron rose through the ranks with ease. Then the manager encouraged him to take a few classes at a local college. This was the first time Aaron had seriously thought about college. Could he be successful, Aaron wondered? Could he actually be the first one in his family to earn a degree? Fortunately, his wife also believed in him and supported his decision to take his first class. Aaron asked his wife and his manager to keep his college enrollment a secret. He did not want others to know about it in case he failed.

Aaron was nervous on his first day of class. He was older than the other students, and he had never considered himself college material. Through hard work and determination, however, he did very well in the class. While he still doubted himself, he enrolled in another class. Again, he performed very well. As his doubt began to fade, he started to take more and more classes. Before he knew it, he was walking across the stage to receive a Bachelor's degree with honors. The ceremony seemed surreal to Aaron. He couldn't believe he had finished college, which once seemed like an impossible feat.

Shortly after graduation, Aaron was admitted into a graduate program at a well-respected university where he earned a Master's degree. He had not only become the first from his family to attend college but also he had earned a graduate degree. Inspired by Aaron's success, his wife enrolled at a technical college, obtained a degree in nursing, and became a registered nurse working in a local hospital's labor and delivery department. Aaron and his wife both worked their way up the career ladder in their respective fields and became leaders in their organizations. They epitomized the American Dream—they worked hard and it paid off.

This story may sound familiar. After all, nearly one in three first-year college students is a first-generation degree candidate, and it is well documented that many are not as successful as Aaron. According to the Center for Student Opportunity, a national nonprofit, 89 percent of first-generation students will not earn an undergraduate degree within six years of starting their studies. In fact, these students “drop out of college at four times the rate of peers whose parents have postsecondary degrees” (Center for Student Opportunity quoted in Huot 2014).

Why do students with parents who have completed college tend to graduate more often than those students whose parents do not hold degrees? That question and many others will be answered as we explore social stratification.

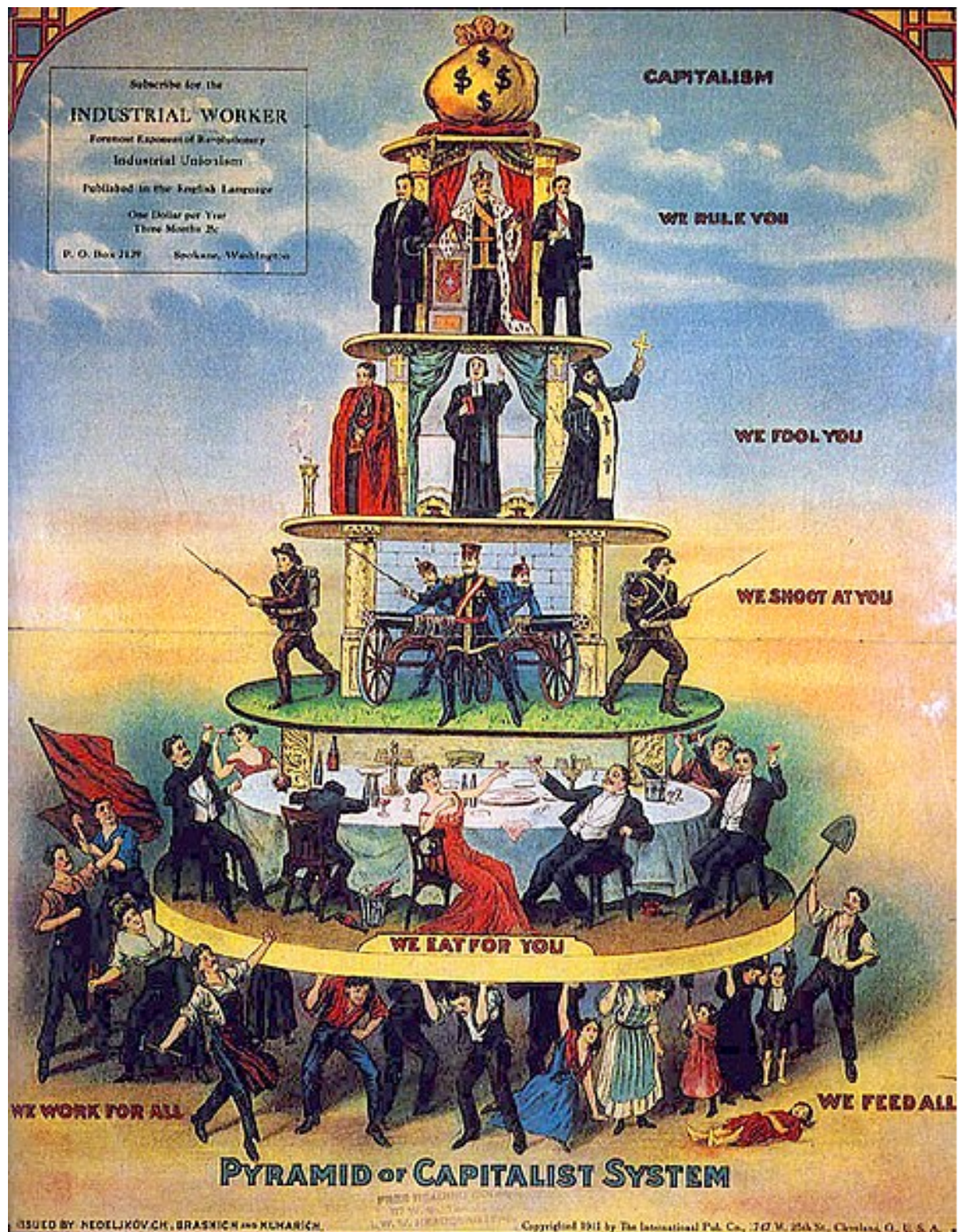
## **References**



Huot, Anne E. 2014. "A Commitment to Making College Accessible to First-Generation College Students." *Huffington Post*. Retrieved December 22, 2014 ([http://www.huffingtonpost.com/anne-e-huot/first-generation-college-students\\_b\\_6081958.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/anne-e-huot/first-generation-college-students_b_6081958.html)).

## What Is Social Stratification?

- Differentiate between open and closed stratification systems
- Distinguish between caste and class systems
- Understand meritocracy as an ideal system of stratification



A 1911 Industrial Worker (IWW newspaper) publication advocating industrial unionism that shows the critique of capitalism. It is based

on a flyer of the "Union of Russian Socialists" spread in 1900 and 1901. (Author unknown.)

"Stratification" is a fancy terminology for "ranking," and **social stratification** in our contemporary societies refers, simply, to ranking people mostly by the three major social-class determinants: education, occupation, and income.



The people who live in these houses most likely share similar levels of income and education. Neighborhoods often house people of the same social standing. Wealthy families do not typically live next door to poorer families, though this varies depending on the particular city and country.  
(Photo courtesy of Orin Zebest/flickr)

Social locations--including social class--tend to be passed on from one generation to the next through their own "class traits," be they middle-class traits or lower-class traits. For example, students whose parents have college degrees (a middle-class trait) tend to feel more comfortable in



surviving college courses, compared to those who are the first generation to attend a college among other family members (a lower-class trait). As a result, the former are more likely than the latter to finish their school, just like their parents.

Research indicates, indeed, that more than a half of CUNY community college students say they are the first generation in their households to attend a college (OIRA 2016). Very sadly, though, their graduation rates are lower than 30% in 10 years, and, even more sadly, more than a half disappear in the first 2 years (OIRA 2015).

This never means that it's no use for those whose parents don't have a college degree to struggle in a college. Quite the contrary. As will be discussed below, since the breakthrough for climbing up the social class ladder is higher education, it's crucially important to study hard and clear the hurdle.

## **Recent Economic Changes and U.S. Stratification**

As a result of the Great Recession resulting mostly from the subprime mortgage crisis of 2007 (see Ch. 18, Work and the Economy), many families and individuals found themselves struggling like never before. The nation fell into a period of prolonged and exceptionally high unemployment. While no one was completely insulated from the recession, perhaps those in the lower classes felt the impact most profoundly. Before the recession, many were living paycheck to paycheck or even had been living comfortably. As the recession hit, they were often among the first to lose their jobs. Unable to find replacement employment, they faced more than loss of income. Their homes were foreclosed, their cars were repossessed, and their ability to afford healthcare was taken away. This put many in the position of deciding whether to put food on the table or fill a needed prescription.

But the Great Recession, like the Great Depression, has changed social attitudes. Where once it was important to demonstrate wealth by wearing expensive clothing items like Calvin Klein shirts and Louis Vuitton shoes, now there's a new, thriftier way of thinking. In many circles, it has become

hip to be frugal. It's no longer about how much we spend, but about how much we don't spend. Think of shows like *Extreme Couponing* on TLC and songs like Macklemore's "Thrift Shop."

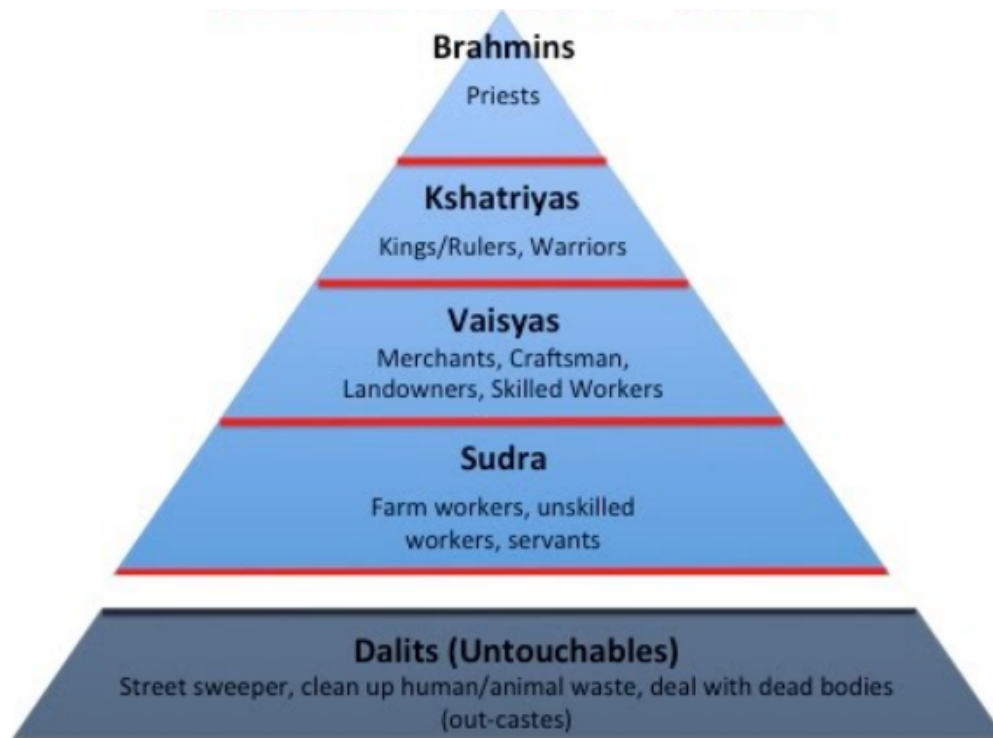
But then again, the way Americans view the economy has undergone a dramatic shift in the week since Donald Trump was elected president of the U.S. in November, 2016 (Business Insider 2016). There was a surge in economic confidence, according to Gallup's weekly tracking poll of how Americans feel about the direction of the country. Since then, stock prices don't stop going up and the unemployment rates don't stop going down. Great! Let's forget about "thrift shop"!

Okay, but let's not take a huge loan... See? In the latter half of 2018, again, as stock prices lost all the gain made in the previous one and a half years (mostly for the trade conflict between China and the U.S.), no one seems sure about the direction of the world economy in 2019...

## **Systems of Stratification**

Sociologists distinguish between two types of systems of stratification. **Closed systems** accommodate little change in social location. They do not allow people to shift locations and do not permit social relationships between different locations. **Open systems**, which are based on achievement, allow movement and interaction between different layers and classes. Different stratification systems--one of the major social conditions--reflect, emphasize, and foster certain cultural values and shape individual beliefs.

## **The Caste System**



India used to have a rigid caste system. The people in the lowest caste suffered from extreme poverty and were shunned by society. Some aspects of India's defunct caste system remain socially relevant. (Courtesy of Giveaway285)

**Caste systems** are closed stratification systems in which there is no "social mobility," or the possibility of going up/down between social locations. In a caste system, that is, people die in the caste in which they were born. Unlike class systems--which will be discussed below--caste systems do not reward studying hard or working hard in terms of going up social locations.

The system is reinforced by cultural values and norms, such as beliefs in fate, destiny, and acceptance of ranking, rather than individual will and freedom. These values and norms are perpetuated, first, through socialization and, then, through social sanction. Children are taught the importance of understanding their social locations, which are ascribed and

fixed, and as they grow, they reaffirm it through social interactions with others all the time, exchanging rewards and, when necessary, punishments.

In order to maintain the boundaries between the castes, the system prohibits **exogamy** (marriage between different social locations) and allows only **endogamy** (marriage within the same social locations). Why? That's because if people engaged in exogamy freely, the boundaries would become messed up, and the system itself would collapse, ultimately. Think about offspring in exogamy, for example. Where would they belong to?

To be noted, though, many states in the U.S. prohibited exogamy in the past, as well. The freedom to love across the racial line is a relatively recent phenomenon in American history (Moran 2001, p. 4). From colonial times, the so-called “antimiscegenation laws” banning interracial sex and marriage were a common feature of state law. Until 1967 (!), the laws were not repealed as unconstitutional.

But what was the purpose of such laws? They helped maintain the boundaries between whites and non-whites. This is one of the major reasons why many sociologists suggest that the U.S. is actually a caste system based on fake liberty and fake equality.

Through the curious case of Thomas Jefferson, the third U.S. president and one of the 12 slaveholders out of the first 18 U.S. presidents, the American reality related to interracial sexual relations might be peeped in. He lived in Virginia, a state that maintained the antimiscegenation laws, but allegedly, he fathered several children with a slave he owned. This may reveal that although the antimiscegenation laws were made in order to regulate interracial sex, the laws didn't work as effectively as expected; many people still enjoyed such prohibited activity, secretly.

Although the caste system in India has been officially dismantled, its residual presence in Indian society is deeply embedded. In rural areas, aspects of the tradition are more likely to remain, while urban centers show less evidence of this past. In India's larger cities, people have more opportunities to choose their own career paths and marriage partners, particularly since the 1970s (Leonard et al. 1980).



## **The Class System**

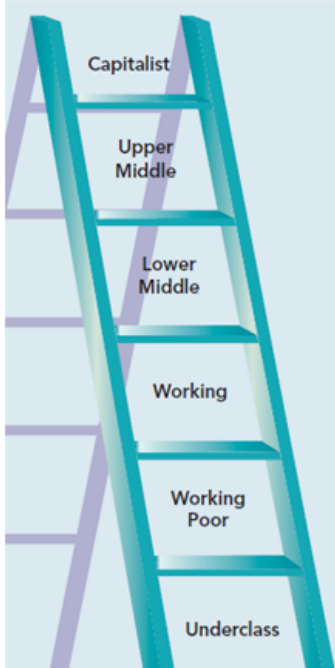
A **class system** is an open stratification system, in which there is "social mobility," or the possibility of going up/down between social locations. Okay, then, how much money should one make to go up to upper class?

Yes, money is important, but money alone would not enable anybody to go up to upper class. The sociological theory of social class is based on the three major determinants including education, occupation, and income. The way these determinants are related to one another is this. The level of your education can determine the type of your occupation, and the type of your occupation can determine the level of your income. For upward mobility, as aforementioned, the breakthrough is thus education.

But here's what you need to know: FORGET ABOUT "upper class." In addition to the three determinants above, that is, it requires you to be born in economically and politically influential families placed at the top 1% of the U.S. population. What do you think?

How many classes are there, then? The number of classes is not clearly agreed upon even among sociologists. Some count 4, for example, while another offer 6 and still another, 8. Karl Marx even insisted that there are only 2 classes, namely, bourgeoisie and proletariat. The important thing to know, however, is that unlike the blood type or the final grade for this course, social class is not decisive but is a matter of definition based upon the three determinants just discussed above. Having said that, though, it is not amorphous at all, either.

## **The U.S. Social Class Ladder**



Social Class	Education	Occupation	Income	Percentage of Population
Capitalist	Prestigious university	Investors and heirs, a few top executives	\$1,000,000+	1%
Upper Middle	College or university, often with postgraduate study	Professionals and upper managers	\$125,000+	15%
Lower Middle	High school or college; often apprenticeship	Semiprofessionals and lower managers, craftspeople, foremen	About \$60,000	34%
Working	High school	Factory workers, clerical workers, low-paid retail sales, and craftspeople	About \$36,000	30%
Working Poor	High school and some high school	Laborers, service workers, low-paid salespeople	About \$19,000	15%
Underclass	Some high school	Unemployed and part-time, on welfare	Under \$12,000	5%

Source: Henslin (2014, p. 231)

The image shown above ("The U.S. Social Class Ladder") presents 6 classes, but this number shouldn't be seen as equally important to the three columns placed in the middle: education, occupation, and income. Although Henslin (2015, p. 231), the source of this image, names the top 1% "capitalist," it's the same as "upper class," which as suggested above is different from all other classes. When "upper middle" and "lower middle" are combined into "middle class," the number of classes can be reduced to 5, rather than 6. Similarly, when "working" and "working poor" are combined into "working class," it can be further reduced to 4, and this still makes sense.

When all the percentages are added up (see the rightmost column above), the U.S. population can be further simplified into: upper class (1%), middle class (49%), and lower class (50%). Notice that middle class is actually placed not in the middle, but above the middle (50%), below which placed is lower class. Most sociological studies of social class examine and compare these two (i.e., ordinary people) in terms of their norms and values, or class traits, excluding upper class (strange people) from analysis-

-with a few exceptions such as C. Wright Mills's "power elite" (which will be discussed in Ch. 17, Government and Politics).

Wait a minute... But which social class do those sports athletes or celebrities who didn't go to a college but who make millions a year belong to? Well, this is a limitation of theories in general. That is, a theory explains "central tendencies" of a given phenomenon, disregarding "exceptions," which do exist but cannot overturn central tendencies (see Ch. 2, Sociological Research). This means that exceptions cannot nullify what a theory indicates.

## **Meritocracy**

**Meritocracy** is an ideology that suggests that social stratification is the result of personal effort—or merit—that determines social standing. High levels of effort will lead to a high social position, and vice versa. Because of the complex structure of societies, however, processes like socialization, and the realities of economic systems, social standing is influenced by multiple factors—not merit alone. No one can deny the importance of personal effort, but if inequalities exist and are structured in our society, which quite seems to be the case, personal effort alone can't change the situation; society as a whole has to deal with them. The government policy known as the New Deal offered during the 1930s to fight the Great Depression can be a good example for this, rather than charity or donation.

## **Status Consistency**

The term **status consistency** refers to the consistency among the three determinants of social class: education, occupation, and income. This means that if we get the information about one of the determinants, then, it's possible for us to make a good guess about the rest. For example, if a person says she is a medical doctor, would it be difficult for you to guess her education level and income level? Or if another person says he is a cashier, how would you guess? Of course, there are cashiers who have a master's degree and who make more than, say, \$200,000 a year (really?),

but what is the probability or central tendencies? Again, the three determinants are consistent within themselves for most people, more or less.

## Summary

Stratification systems are either closed, meaning they allow little change in social position, or open, meaning they allow movement and interaction between the layers. A caste system is one in which social standing is based on ascribed status or birth. Class systems are open, with achievement playing a role in social position. People fall into classes based on factors like wealth, income, education, and occupation. A meritocracy is a system of social stratification that confers standing based on personal worth, rewarding effort.

## Further Research

The *New York Times* investigated social stratification in their series of articles called “Class Matters.” The online accompaniment to the series includes an interactive graphic called “How Class Works,” which tallies four factors—occupation, education, income, and wealth—and places an individual within a certain class and percentile. What class describes you? Test your class rank on the interactive site:

[http://openstaxcollege.org/1/NY Times how class works](http://openstaxcollege.org/1/NY_Times_how_class_works)

## References

Business Insider. 2016. "Republicans and Democrats have dramatically shifted their views of the US economy since the election." Nov., 15. (<http://www.businessinsider.com/republicans-democrats-economic-view-shifted-after-trump-election-2016-11>).

Henslin, James M. 2014. *Essentials of Sociology: A Down-to-Earth Approach*, 11/E. New York: Pearson.

Köhler, Nicholas. 2010. "An Uncommon Princess." *Maclean's*, November 22. Retrieved January 9, 2012 (<http://www2.macleans.ca/2010/11/22/an-uncommon-princess/>).

Leonard, Karen, and Susan Weller. 1980. "Declining subcaste endogamy in India: the Hyderabad Kayasths, 1900–75." *American Ethnologist* 7 (3): 504–517.

McKee, Victoria. 1996. "Blue Blood and the Color of Money." *New York Times*, June 9.

Marquand, Robert. 2011. "What Kate Middleton's Wedding to Prince William Could Do for Britain." *Christian Science Monitor*, April 15. Retrieved January 9, 2012 (<http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Europe/2011/0415/What-Kate-Middleton-s-wedding-to-Prince-William-could-do-for-Britain>).

OIRA (Office of Institutional Research and Assessment). 2016. "Student Experience Survey: Fall 2016." ([http://www2.cuny.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/page-assets/about/administration/offices/oira/institutional/data/current-student-data-book-by-subject/ug\\_student\\_profile\\_f16.pdf](http://www2.cuny.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/page-assets/about/administration/offices/oira/institutional/data/current-student-data-book-by-subject/ug_student_profile_f16.pdf)).

OIRA (Office of Institutional Research and Assessment). 2015. "Institution Retention and Graduation Rates of Full-time First-time Freshmen in Associate Programs by Year of Entry: Total University." ([http://www.cuny.edu/irdatabook/rpts2\\_AY\\_current/RTGI\\_0001\\_FT\\_FTFR\\_ASSOC\\_TOT\\_UNIV.rpt.pdf](http://www.cuny.edu/irdatabook/rpts2_AY_current/RTGI_0001_FT_FTFR_ASSOC_TOT_UNIV.rpt.pdf)).

Wong, Grace. 2011. "Kate Middleton: A Family Business That Built a Princess." *CNN Money*. Retrieved December 22, 2014 (<http://money.cnn.com/2011/04/14/smallbusiness/kate-middleton-party-pieces/>).

## Glossary

caste system

a system in which people are born into a social standing that they will retain their entire lives

class

a group who shares a common social status based on factors like wealth, income, education, and occupation

class system

social standing based on social factors and individual accomplishments

endogamous marriages

unions of people within the same social category

exogamous unions

unions of spouses from different social categories

income

the money a person earns from work or investments

meritocracy

an ideal system in which personal effort—or merit—determines social standing

primogeniture

a law stating that all property passes to the firstborn son

social stratification

a socioeconomic system that divides society's members into categories ranking from high to low, based on things like wealth, power, and prestige

status consistency

the consistency, or lack thereof, of an individual's rank across social categories like income, education, and occupation

wealth

the value of money and assets a person has from, for example, inheritance

## Social Stratification and Mobility in the United States

- Understand the U.S. class structure
- Describe several types of social mobility
- Recognize characteristics that define and identify class

Social stratification is shaped, to a great extent, upon unequal distribution of resources. Such resources, which positively or negatively affect stratification, include race, ethnicity, gender, and even social class of one's family in the form of class traits. Regarding the resource of family's social class, some sociologists suggest that "class reproduces itself." Middle-class children are more likely than lower-class children to end up middle class in adult, for their families' positive resource. Again, however, there is a breakthrough for lower-class kids: education.

## Standard of Living

Owing to the New Deal immediately followed by World War II, the United States has seen a steady rise in its **standard of living**, the ability of a population to consume goods and services measured, most often, by the "GDP per capita." (If you want to see what this is, read below. If not, don't bother--for now.)

Okay, good. Here is what you want to see. The GDP (Gross Domestic Product) is the total amount of money transacted in a country during a given period of time, including the government spending plus the value of exports minus that of imports. The GDP per capita is the value of GDP divided by the country's population, i.e., the mean average. To be noted, though, if the gap between the rich and the poor is huge, just as seen in the U.S., the GDP per capita hardly indicates the "standard" of living of the country. For this reason, the average income is based not on the mean average, but on the median, the middle value of a given data set that is not affected by too big values (e.g., Jeff Bezos, Bill Gates...).

People believe that the United States is a "middle-class society." In their view, a few people are rich, a few are poor, and most are fairly well off,

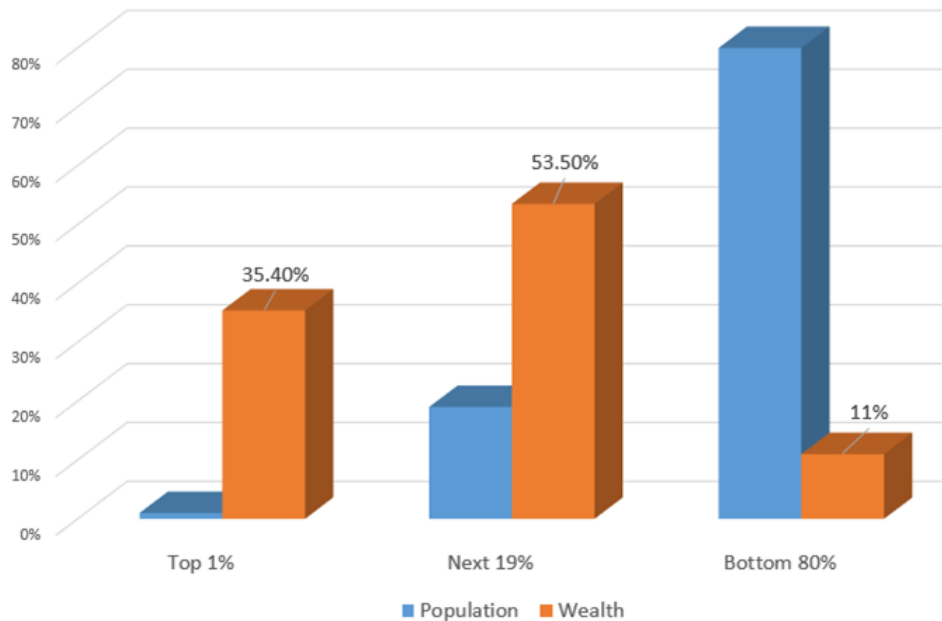
belonging to the middle of the social strata. A Federal Reserve Bank study shows, however, that the top 1% of the population holds one-third of the nation's wealth (Kennickell 2009). The rich receive the best schooling, have better healthcare, and consume the most qualified goods and services. On the other hand, millions of people struggle to pay rent, buy food, find work, and afford basic medical care. Single mothers tend to have a lower income and lower standard of living than their married or male counterparts. The GDP per capita, just mentioned above, overlooks this reality. (Okay, you can go back to the paragraph above.)

In the United States, as in most high-income nations, social stratifications and standards of living are in part based on occupation (Lin and Xie 1988). Aside from the obvious impact that income has on someone's standard of living, occupations also influence social standing through the relative levels of prestige they afford. Employment in medicine, law, or engineering confers high status. Teachers and police officers are generally respected, though not considered particularly prestigious. At the other end of the scale, some of the lowest rankings apply to positions like waitress, janitor, and the like.

The most significant threat to the relatively high standard of living we're accustomed to in the United States is the decline of the middle class. The size, income, and wealth of the middle class have all been declining since the 1970s. This is occurring at a time when corporate profits have increased more than 141%, and CEO pay has risen by more than 298% (Popken 2007).

### **Unequal Distribution of Wealth in the U.S., 2010**





Source: G. William Domhoff (2013).

As shown above (Unequal Distribution of Wealth in the U.S., 2010), the top 1% of the U.S. population (upper class) own 35.4% of nation's wealth, and the next 19% (the managerial, professional, and business stratum) had 53.5%, which means that just 20% of the people own a remarkable 89%, leaving only 11% of the wealth for the bottom 80% (wage and salary workers) (Domhoff 2013).

This can be likened to the situation, in which there are 10 people and 10 bananas. Of the 10, 2 enjoy 9 bananas, and 8 share only 1 banana!

The United States has the resources to provide the basic necessities to those in need through a series of federal and state social welfare programs; however, when compared to other first-world countries, such as the UK, Germany, France, and Japan, it lags way behind. In addition, such programs are operated by private corporations for their own profit in the name of people's "welfare." The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), which used to be known as the "food stamp" program, is one of the programs administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Initially, the **social welfare programs** began during the Great Depression in the 1930s for the sake of welfare of those in need itself, rather than profit of corporations. Through the programs, unmarketable or surplus food was



Does a person's appearance indicate class? Can you tell a man's education level based on his clothing? Do you know a woman's income by the car she drives?

## Upper Class



Members of the upper class can afford to live, work, and play in exclusive places designed for luxury and comfort. (Photo courtesy of [PrimeImageMedia.com/flickr](https://www.primeimagemedia.com/flickr))

The upper class is considered the top, and only the powerful elite get to see the view from there. In the United States, people with extreme wealth make up 1 percent of the population, and they own one-third of the country's wealth (Beeghley 2008).

Money provides not just access to material goods, but also access to a lot of power. As corporate leaders, members of the upper class make decisions that affect the job status of millions of people. As media owners, they influence the collective identity of the nation. They run the major network

television stations, radio broadcasts, newspapers, magazines, publishing houses, and sports franchises. As board members of the most influential colleges and universities, they influence cultural attitudes and values. As philanthropists, they establish foundations to support social causes they believe in. As campaign contributors, they sway politicians and fund campaigns, sometimes to protect their own economic interests.

U.S. society has historically distinguished between “old money” (inherited wealth passed from one generation to the next) and “new money” (wealth you have earned and built yourself). While both types may have equal net worth, they have traditionally held different social standings. People of old money, firmly situated in the upper class for generations, have held high prestige. Their families have socialized them to know the customs, norms, and expectations that come with wealth. Often, the very wealthy don’t work for wages. Some study business or become lawyers in order to manage the family fortune. Others, such as Paris Hilton and Kim Kardashian, capitalize on being a rich socialite and transform that into celebrity status, flaunting a wealthy lifestyle.

However, new-money members of the upper class are not oriented to the customs and mores of the elite. They haven’t gone to the most exclusive schools. They have not established old-money social ties. People with new money might flaunt their wealth, buying sports cars and mansions, but they might still exhibit behaviors attributed to the middle and lower classes.

## **The Middle Class**



These members of a club likely consider themselves middle class. (Photo courtesy of United Way Canada-Centraide Canada/flickr)

Many people consider themselves middle class, but there are differing ideas about what that means. People with annual incomes of \$150,000 call themselves middle class, as do people who annually earn \$30,000. That helps explain why, in the United States, the middle class is broken into upper and lower subcategories.

Upper-middle-class people tend to hold bachelor's and postgraduate degrees. They've studied subjects such as business, management, law, or medicine. Lower-middle-class members hold bachelor's degrees from four-year colleges or associate's degrees from two-year community or technical colleges.

Comfort is a key concept to the middle class. Middle-class people work hard and live fairly comfortable lives. Upper-middle-class people tend to pursue careers that earn comfortable incomes. They provide their families with large homes and nice cars. They may go skiing or boating on vacation. Their children receive high-quality education and healthcare (Gilbert 2010).

In the lower middle class, people hold jobs supervised by members of the upper middle class. They fill technical, lower-level management or

administrative support positions. Compared to lower-class work, lower-middle-class jobs carry more prestige and come with slightly higher paychecks. With these incomes, people can afford a decent, mainstream lifestyle, but they struggle to maintain it. They generally don't have enough income to build significant savings. In addition, their grip on class status is more precarious than in the upper tiers of the class system. When budgets are tight, lower-middle-class people are often the ones to lose their jobs.

## **The Lower Class**



This man is a custodian at a restaurant. His job, which is crucial to the business, is considered lower class. (Photo courtesy of Frederick Md Publicity/flickr)

The lower class is also referred to as the working class. Just like the middle and upper classes, the lower class can be divided into subsets: the working class, the working poor, and the underclass. Compared to the lower middle class, lower-class people have less of an educational background and earn

smaller incomes. They work jobs that require little prior skill or experience and often do routine tasks under close supervision.

Working-class people, the highest subcategory of the lower class, often land decent jobs in fields like custodial or food service. The work is hands-on and often physically demanding, such as landscaping, cooking, cleaning, or building.

Beneath the working class is the working poor. Like the working class, they have unskilled, low-paying employment. However, their jobs rarely offer benefits such as healthcare or retirement planning, and their positions are often seasonal or temporary. They work as sharecroppers, migrant farm workers, housecleaners, and day laborers. Some are high school dropouts. Some are illiterate, unable to read job ads.

How can people work full-time and still be poor? Even working full-time, millions of the working poor earn incomes too meager to support a family. Minimum wage varies from state to state, but in many states it is approaching \$8.00 per hour (Department of Labor 2014). At that rate, working 40 hours a week earns \$320. That comes to \$16,640 a year, before tax and deductions. Even for a single person, the pay is low. A married couple with children will have a hard time covering expenses.

The underclass is the United States' lowest tier. Members of the underclass live mainly in inner cities. Many are unemployed or underemployed. Those who do hold jobs typically perform menial tasks for little pay. Some of the underclass are homeless. For many, welfare systems provide a much-needed support through food assistance, medical care, housing, and the like.

## **Social Mobility**

**Social mobility** refers to the possibility of going up/down between social locations. Simply, upward mobility is to go up, and downward mobility, to go down. When the unit of analysis is the individual, there are two types: intergenerational mobility (the difference between your parents and you in adult in social class) and intragenerational mobility (the difference between

your siblings and yourself in social class). When the unit of analysis is the society as a whole, it is called structural mobility.

### **Intergenerational mobility**

"Inter" means "between," as in international or interracial. So intergenerational mobility means the difference in social class *between* generations. When individuals born in lower class families go up to middle class in adult, it is called upward intergenerational mobility. Conversely, individuals born in middle class families go down to lower class, it is called downward intergenerational mobility. Think about yourself. Which direction are you taking?

### **Intragenerational mobility**

"Intra" means "within." It's not easy to find words attached to "intra." But what about this? *Intrastate* highways run only within a state, for example, while interstate highways run between states. Does this clarify the term...? Anyway. Intragenerational mobility happens, if ever, within a generation, such as brothers or sisters born in the same families. Assume you were born in a middle class family, and you have a brother. When your brother stays in middle class, and you go down to lower class in adult, it's called downward intragenerational mobility. You don't like this example?

### **Structural mobility**

So far, the unit of analysis was the individual, who goes up or down. Structural mobility is about the society as a whole going up or down. Because of the Great Depression, for example, the standard of living for most Americans went down in the 1930s, which can be considered downward structural mobility. Owing to the government intervention to this on the federal level called the New Deal policy, however, the U.S. economy began recovering. This was followed by World War II, owing to which the U.S. economy became unprecedentedly vigorous, which can be considered upward structural mobility.

## **Class Traits**

**Class traits**, also called class markers, are the typical customs, values, and norms that are shared in each social class. People in the same social class,



indeed, act, talk, shop, eat, etc. somewhat in similar ways. They watch similar TV programs, read similar magazines, have knowledge about politics on similar levels. When you observe what people do and how they think, you can make, to some extent, a good guess about their social class. That is why such customs, values, and norms are called class traits, or class markers. By these, class is marked on people.

Yes, consumption is included in class traits, but your focus should be placed not on money or affordability, but on lifestyle, values, and so on. Research indicates, in terms of consumption indeed, class traits are better predictors than money alone in areas that do not involve high dollar expenditures, but reflect an underlying lifestyle, values (such as concern with health), and so on (Mihić et al. 2006, p. 80; paraphrased).

Other than consumption, for sure, class traits can be observed in various ways. For example, lower-class people are more likely than middle-class people to support spanking in raising kids. Or, lower-class people are less likely than middle-class people to vote. These are about customs, values, and norms in relation to social class, not relevant to money or affordability.

## **Summary**

There are three main classes in the United States: upper, middle, and lower class. Social mobility describes a shift from one social class to another. Class traits, also called class markers, are the typical customs, values, and norms that are shared in each social class.

## **Further Research**

PBS made a documentary about social class called “People Like Us: Social Class in America.” The filmmakers interviewed people who lived in Park Avenue penthouses and Appalachian trailer parks. The accompanying web site is full of information, interactive games, and life stories from those who participated. Read about it at [http://openstaxcollege.org/1/social\\_class\\_in\\_America](http://openstaxcollege.org/1/social_class_in_America)

## References

- Beeghley, Leonard. 2008. *The Structure of Social Stratification in the United States*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Domhoff, G. William. 2013. "Wealth, Income, and Power." Retrieved December 22, 2014 (<http://www2.ucsc.edu/whorulesamerica/power/wealth.html>).
- Gilbert, Dennis. 2010. *The American Class Structure in an Age of Growing Inequality*. Newbury Park, CA: Pine Forge Press.
- Kennickell, Arthur B. 2009. *Ponds and Streams: Wealth and Income in the U.S., 1989 to 2007*. January 7. Retrieved January 10, 2012 (<http://www.federalreserve.gov/pubs/feds/2009/200913/200913pap.pdf>).
- Lin, Nan, and Wen Xie. 1988. "Occupational Prestige in Urban China." *American Journal of Sociology* 93(4):793–832.
- Mihić, M. and G. Čulina. 2006. "Buying behavior consumption: Social class versus income." *Management* Vol. 11, 2, pp. 77-92.
- Popken, Ben. "CEO Pay Up 298%, Average Worker's? 4.3% (1995-2005)," 2007, *The Consumerist*. Retrieved on December 31, 2014 (<http://consumerist.com/2007/04/09/ceo-pay-up-298-average-workers-43-1995-2005/>)
- Time. 2012. "Food Stamps: More Benefit to Big Food Than to the Poor?" July 09. (<http://business.time.com/2012/07/09/food-stamps-more-benefit-to-big-food-than-to-the-poor>).
- United States Department of Labor. 2014. "Wage and Hour Division: Minimum Wage Laws in the States—September 1, 2014." Retrieved January 10, 2012 (<http://www.dol.gov/whd/minwage/america.htm>).
- United States Department of Agriculture, 2013, "Food and Nutrition Assistance Research Database: Overview." Retrieved December 31, 2014

(<http://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/food-and-nutrition-assistance-research-database/ridge-project-summaries.aspx?type=2&summaryId=233>)

## **Glossary**

### **class traits**

the typical behaviors, customs, and norms that define each class (also called class markers)

### **downward mobility**

a lowering of one's social class

### **intergenerational mobility**

a difference in social class between different generations of a family

### **intragenerational mobility**

a difference in social class between different members of the same generation

### **social mobility**

the ability to change positions within a social stratification system

### **standard of living**

the level of wealth available to acquire material goods and comforts to maintain a particular socioeconomic lifestyle

### **structural mobility**

a societal change that enables a whole group of people to move up or down the class ladder

### **upward mobility**

an increase—or upward shift—in social class

## Global Stratification and Inequality

- Define global stratification
- Describe different sociological models for understanding global stratification
- Understand how studies of global stratification identify worldwide inequalities



A family lives in this grass hut in Ethiopia. Another family lives in a single-wide trailer in the trailer park in the United States. Both families are considered poor, or lower class. With such differences in global stratification, what constitutes poverty? (Photo (a) courtesy of Canned Muffins/flickr; Photo (b) courtesy of Herb Neufeld/flickr)

**Global stratification** compares the wealth, economic stability, status, and power of countries across the world. Global stratification highlights worldwide patterns of social inequality.

In the early years of civilization, our ancestors living in their own hunting and gathering tribes or in small agricultural folk villages rarely interacted with other societies. When explorers (mostly from Europe) began traveling around the world, societies began trading goods, as well as ideas and customs.

In the nineteenth century, the Industrial Revolution brought unprecedented wealth to Western Europe and North America. Due to mechanical

inventions and new means of production, people began working in factories--not only men, but women and children as well. By the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, industrial technology had gradually raised the standard of living for many people in the United States and Europe.

The Industrial Revolution also saw the rise of vast inequalities between countries that were industrialized and those that were not. As some nations embraced technology and saw increased wealth and goods, others maintained their ways; as the gap widened, the nonindustrialized nations fell further behind. Some social researchers, such as Walt Rostow, suggest that the disparity also resulted from power differences. Applying a conflict theory perspective, he asserts that industrializing nations took advantage of the resources of traditional nations. As industrialized nations became rich, other nations became poor (Rostow 1960).

Sociologists studying global stratification analyze economic comparisons between nations. Income, purchasing power, and wealth are used to calculate global stratification. Global stratification also compares the quality of life that a country's population can have.

Poverty levels have been shown to vary greatly. The poor in wealthy countries like the United States or Europe are much better off than the poor in less-industrialized countries such as Mali or India. In 2002, the UN implemented the Millennium Project, an attempt to cut poverty worldwide by the year 2015. To reach the project's goal, planners in 2006 estimated that industrialized nations must set aside 0.7 percent of their gross national income—the total value of the nation's good and service, plus or minus income received from and sent to other nations—to aid in developing countries (Landler and Sanger, 2009; Millennium Project 2006).

## **Models of Global Stratification**



Luxury vacation resorts can contribute to a poorer country's economy. This one, in Jamaica, attracts middle and upper-middle class people from wealthier nations. The resort is a source of income and provides jobs for local people. Just outside its borders, however, are poverty-stricken neighborhoods. (Photo courtesy of gailf548/flickr)

Various models of global stratification all have one thing in common: they rank countries according to their relative economic status, or gross national product (GNP). Traditional models stratify the different areas of the world, naming them "first world," "second world," and "third world." First and second world described industrialized nations, while third world referred to "undeveloped" countries (Henslin 2004) (this will be discussed more in Ch. 9, Global Inequality).

**Note:**

### **The Big Picture: Calculating Global Stratification**

A few organizations take on the job of comparing the wealth of nations. The Population Reference Bureau (PRB) is one of them. Besides a focus on population data, the PRB publishes an annual report that measures the relative economic well-being of all the world's countries. It's called the Gross National Income (GNI) and Purchasing Power Parity (PPP).

The GNI measures the current value of goods and services produced by a country. The PPP measures the relative power a country has to purchase those same goods and services. So, GNI refers to productive output and PPP refers to buying power. The total figure is divided by the number of residents living in a country to establish the average income of a resident of that country.

Because costs of goods and services vary from one country to the next, the GNI PPP converts figures into a relative international unit. Calculating GNI PPP figures helps researchers accurately compare countries' standard of living. They allow the United Nations and Population Reference Bureau to compare and rank the wealth of all countries and consider international stratification issues ([nationsonline.org](http://nationsonline.org)).

## **Summary**

Global stratification compares the wealth, economic stability, status, and power of countries as a whole. By comparing income and productivity between nations, researchers can better identify global inequalities.

## **Further Research**

Nations Online refers to itself as “among other things, a more or less objective guide to the world, a statement for the peaceful, nonviolent coexistence of nations.” The website provides a variety of cultural, financial, historical, and ethnic information on countries and peoples throughout the world: [http://openstaxcollege.org/1/Nations\\_Online](http://openstaxcollege.org/1/Nations_Online).

## **References**



Millennium Project. 2006. "Expanding the financial envelope to achieve the Goals." Millennium Project Official Website. Retrieved January 9, 2012 ([http://www.unmillenniumproject.org/reports/costs\\_benefits2.htm](http://www.unmillenniumproject.org/reports/costs_benefits2.htm)).

Nationsonline.org. "Countries by Gross National Income (GNI)." Retrieved January 9, 2012 ([http://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/GNI\\_PPP\\_of\\_countries.htm](http://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/GNI_PPP_of_countries.htm)).

PRB.org. "GNI PPP Per Capita (US\$)." *PRB 2011 World Population Data Sheet*. 2011 Population Reference Bureau. Retrieved January 10, 2012 (<http://www.prb.org/DataFinder/Topic/Rankings.aspx?ind=61>).

Rostow, Walt W. 1960. *The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto*. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.

Landler, Mark, and David E. Sanger. 2009. "World Leaders Pledge \$1.1 Trillion for Crisis." *New York Times*, April 3. Retrieved January 9, 2012 (<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/04/03/world/europe/03summit.html>).

## **Glossary**

global stratification

a comparison of the wealth, economic stability, status, and power of countries as a whole



## Theoretical Perspectives on Social Stratification

- Understand and apply functionalist, conflict theory, and interactionist perspectives on social stratification

Basketball is one of the highest-paying professional sports. There is stratification even among teams. For example, the Minnesota Timberwolves hand out the lowest annual payroll, while the Los Angeles Lakers reportedly pay the highest. Kobe Bryant, a Lakers shooting guard, is one of the highest paid athletes in the NBA, earning around \$30.5 million a year (Forbes 2014). Even within specific fields, layers are stratified and members are ranked.

In sociology, even an issue such as NBA salaries can be seen from various points of view. Functionalists will examine the purpose of such high salaries, while conflict theorists will study the exorbitant salaries as an unfair distribution of money. Social stratification takes on new meanings when it is examined from different sociological perspectives—functionalism, conflict theory, and symbolic interactionism.

## Functionalism

Functionalists examine how society's parts operate for the sake of the whole. According to functionalism, different aspects of society exist because they serve a needed purpose. What is the function of social stratification?

In 1945, sociologists Kingsley Davis and Wilbert Moore published the **Davis-Moore thesis**, which argued that the greater the functional importance of a social role, the greater must be the reward. The theory posits that social stratification represents the inherently unequal value of different work. Certain tasks in society are more valuable than others. Qualified people who fill those positions must be rewarded more than others. In short, that is, the contribution you make to your society should be equal to the reward you can get; the greater your contribution, the greater your reward. Really?

In 1953, Melvin Tumin countered the Davis-Moore thesis in “Some Principles of Stratification: A Critical Analysis.” He pointed out that the thesis neglected to see that due to our own social locations, such as race or gender, we may not have, at the onset, equal chances to contribute to the society. Social stratification prevents people from attempting to fill roles (Tumin 1953). Indeed, an underprivileged youth has less chance of becoming a scientist, no matter how smart she is, because of the relative lack of opportunity available to her. The Davis-Moore thesis also neglected to see that while giant corporations' CEOs (such as Jeff Bezos) make billions by cutting their workers' wages rather than by contributing to the society, school teachers or nurses don't get paid much although they do very important jobs for the society. The greater your contribution, the greater your reward? Uh-oh...

The Davis-Moore thesis, though open for debate, was an early attempt to explain why stratification exists. The thesis states that social stratification is necessary to promote excellence, productivity, and efficiency, thus giving people something to strive for. Davis and Moore believed that the system serves society as a whole because it allows everyone to benefit to a certain extent. Alas...

## Conflict Theory



These people are protesting a decision made

by Tennessee Technological University in Cookeville, Tennessee, to lay off custodians and outsource the jobs to a private firm to avoid paying employee benefits. Private job agencies often pay lower hourly wages. Is the decision fair? (Photo courtesy of Brian Stansberry/Wikimedia Commons)

Unlike functionalists, conflict theorists are critical of social stratification, asserting that it benefits only a small number of powerful people, not all of society. For instance, to a conflict theorist, it seems wrong that a basketball player is paid millions for an annual contract while a public school teacher earns \$35,000 a year. Stratification, conflict theorists believe, perpetuates inequality. Conflict theorists try to bring awareness to inequalities, such as how a rich society can have so many poor people.

Many conflict theorists draw on the work of Karl Marx. During the nineteenth-century era of industrialization, Marx believed social stratification resulted from people's relationship to production. People were divided by a single line: those who owned factories (bourgeoisie) and those who worked in them (proletariat). In Marx's time, bourgeoisie owned the "means of production," or anything that can make money, such as factories, machines, buildings, and land, as they still do today. Ordinary people (proletariat) were heavily exploited for cheap wages. Marx saw workers experience deep alienation, isolation, and misery resulting from powerless status levels (Marx 1848).

Today, the strained working relationship between employers and employees still remains. The capitalist golden rule is this: the lower the wages, the higher the profits. This powerful system makes capitalists richer and, on the other hand, keeps workers poor, or even poorer.

In an interview, Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez makes this tendency deadly clear. The news article was titled "Jeff Bezos Is a Billionaire for Paying Amazon Workers 'Starvation Wages'" (CNSNews 2019). Ocasio-Cortez

said she was concerned that Bezos' "being a billionaire is predicated on paying people starvation wages and stripping them of their ability to access health care, and also if his ability to be a billionaire is predicated on the fact that his workers are taking food stamps." After being forced by Sen. Bernie Sanders, though, Jeff Bezos decided to raise its minimum wage to \$15 an hour.

## **Symbolic Interactionism**

Symbolic interactionism is a paradigm that observes and analyzes everyday interactions of individuals. Symbolic interactionism, therefore, examines stratification from a micro-level perspective. This analysis focuses on how people's social standing affects their everyday interactions.

In most communities, people interact primarily with others who share the same social standing. It is precisely because of social stratification that people tend to live, work, and associate with others like themselves, people who share their same income level, educational background, or racial background, and even tastes in food, music, and clothing. The built-in system of social stratification groups people together. This is one of the reasons why it was rare for a royal prince like England's Prince William to marry a commoner.

Symbolic interactionists also note that people's appearance reflects their perceived social standing. Housing, clothing, and transportation indicate social status, as do hairstyles, taste in accessories, and personal style.



(a) A group of construction workers on the job site, and (b) a group of businessmen. What categories of stratification do these construction workers share? How do construction workers differ from executives or custodians? Who is more skilled? Who has greater prestige in society? (Photo (a) courtesy of Wikimedia Commons; Photo (b) courtesy of Chun Kit/flickr)

To symbolically display their social standing, people often engage in **conspicuous consumption**, the purchase of more expensive goods/services than necessary. Items people buy and use--such as jackets, shoes, backpacks, and so on--can show what they themselves are like. In order to show off, hence, they spend more money especially for things others can see, although cheaper ones may not differ much from such items in terms of functions. For example, people, especially youths (such as you), choose items by brand names, which are way more expensive than their imitations, such as Nike (not Mike), Adidas (not Abibas), Converse (not Converce), and so on. Old Navy is okay, but Old Navi is out. Why? That's because it's not cool, but unbearably embarrassing! This powerful social psychological phenomenon drives people toward conspicuous consumption. Some elderly, such as the professor of your sociology course, don't even care, though.

## Summary

Social stratification can be examined from different sociological perspectives—functionalism, conflict theory, and symbolic interactionism. The functionalist perspective states that systems exist in society for good reasons. Conflict theorists observe that stratification promotes inequality, such as between rich business owners and poor workers. Symbolic interactionists examine stratification from a micro-level perspective. They observe how social standing affects people’s everyday interactions and how the concept of “social class” is constructed and maintained through everyday interactions.

## References

Davis, Kingsley, and Wilbert E. Moore. “Some Principles of Stratification.” *American Sociological Review* 10(2):242–249. Retrieved January 9, 2012 (<http://www.jstor.org/stable/2085643>).

Forbes.com LLC. 2014. “#15 Kobe Bryant.” Retrived December 22, 2014 (<http://www.forbes.com/profile/kobe-bryant/>).

Marx, Karl. 1848. *Manifesto of the Communist Party*. Retrieved January 9, 2012 (<http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1848/communist-manifesto/>).

Tumin, Melvin M. 1953. “Some Principles of Stratification: A Critical Analysis.” *American Sociological Review* 18(4):387–394.

## Glossary

conspicuous consumption

the act of buying and using products to make a statement about social standing

Davis-Moore thesis

a thesis that argues some social stratification is a social necessity



## Introduction to Global Inequality

class="introduction"

Contemporary  
economic  
development often  
follows a similar  
pattern around the  
world, best  
described as a  
growing gap  
between the have  
and have-nots.

(Photo courtesy of  
Alicia  
Nijdam/Wikimedi  
a Commons)



The April 24, 2013 collapse of the Rana Plaza in Dhaka, Bangladesh that killed over 1,100 people, was the deadliest garment factory accident in history, and it was preventable (International Labour Organization, Department of Communication 2014).

In addition to garment factories employing about 5,000 people, the building contained a bank, apartments, childcare facilities, and a variety of shops. Many of these closed the day before the collapse when cracks were discovered in the building walls. When some of the garment workers refused to enter the building, they were threatened with the loss of a month's pay. Most were young women, aged twenty or younger. They typically worked over thirteen hours a day, with two days off each month. For this work, they took home between twelve and twenty-two cents an hour, or \$10.56 to \$12.48 a week. Without that pay, most would have been unable to feed their children. In contrast, the U.S. federal minimum wage is \$7.25 an hour, and workers receive wages at time-and-a-half rates for work in excess of forty hours a week.

Did you buy clothes from Walmart in 2012? What about at The Children's Place? Did you ever think about where those clothes came from? Of the outsourced garments made in the garment factories, thirty-two were intended for U.S., Canadian, and European stores. In the aftermath of the collapse, it was revealed that Walmart jeans were made in the Ether Tex garment factory on the fifth floor of the Rana Plaza building, while 120,000 pounds of clothing for The Children's Place were produced in the New Wave Style Factory, also located in the building. Afterward, Walmart and The Children's Place pledged \$1 million and \$450,000 (respectively) to the Rana Plaza Trust Fund, but fifteen other companies with clothing made in the building have contributed nothing, including U.S. companies Cato and J.C. Penney (Institute for Global Labour and Human Rights 2014).

While you read this chapter, think about the global system that allows U.S. companies to outsource their manufacturing to peripheral nations, where many women and children work in conditions that some characterize as slave labor. Do people in the United States have a responsibility to foreign workers? Should U.S. corporations be held accountable for what happens to



garment factory workers who make their clothing? What can you do as a consumer to help such workers?

## References

Butler, Sarah. 2013. "Bangladeshi Factory Deaths Spark Action among High-Street Clothing Chains." *The Guardian*. Retrieved November 7, 2014 (<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/jun/23/rana-plaza-factory-disaster-bangladesh-primark>).

Institute for Global Labour and Human Rights. 2014. "Rana Plaza: A Look Back and Forward." *Global Labour Rights*. Retrieved November 7, 2014 (<http://www.globallabourrights.org/campaigns/factory-collapse-in-bangladesh>).

International Labour Organization, Department of Communication. 2014. "Post Rana Plaza: A Vision for the Future." *Working Conditions: International Labour Organization*. Retrieved November 7, 2014 ([http://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/who-we-are/ilo-director-general/statements-and-speeches/WCMS\\_240382/lang--en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/who-we-are/ilo-director-general/statements-and-speeches/WCMS_240382/lang--en/index.htm)).

Korzeniewicz, Robert, and Timothy Patrick Moran. 2009. *Unveiling Inequality: A World Historical Perspective*. New York, NY: Russell Sage Foundation.

## Global Stratification and Classification

- Describe global stratification
- Understand how different classification systems have developed
- Use terminology from Wallerstein's world systems approach
- Explain the World Bank's classification of economies

Just as the United States' wealth is increasingly concentrated among its richest citizens while the middle class slowly disappears, **global inequality** is concentrating resources in certain nations and is significantly affecting the opportunities of individuals in poorer and less powerful countries. In fact, a recent Oxfam (2014) reports that suggested the richest 85 individuals in the world are worth more than the poorest 3.5 billion people combined. The **GINI coefficient** measures income inequality between countries using a 100-point scale on which 1 represents complete equality and 100 represents the highest possible inequality. In 2007, the global GINI coefficient of the wealth gap between the core nations in the northern part of the world and the mostly peripheral nations in the southern part of the world was 75.5 percent (Korseniewicz and Moran 2009). But before we delve into the complexities of global inequality, let's consider how the three major sociological perspectives might contribute to our understanding of it.

The functionalist perspective is a macroanalytical view that focuses on the way that all aspects of society are integral to the continued health and viability of the whole. A functionalist might focus on why we have global inequality and what social purposes it serves. This view might assert, for example, that we have global inequality because some nations are better than others at adapting to new technologies and profiting from a globalized economy, and that poor nations are getting a lot of benefits in many ways, such as the great expansion of job opportunities, the introduction of new technologies and machines, and the knowledge of highly advanced business models.

Conflict theory focuses on the creation, expansion, and reproduction of inequality. A conflict theorist would likely address the systematic inequality created when rich nations exploit poor nations' resources, such as oil, agricultural products, and cheap labor. Under such circumstances, natural environments of poor nations are endangered, and so are social

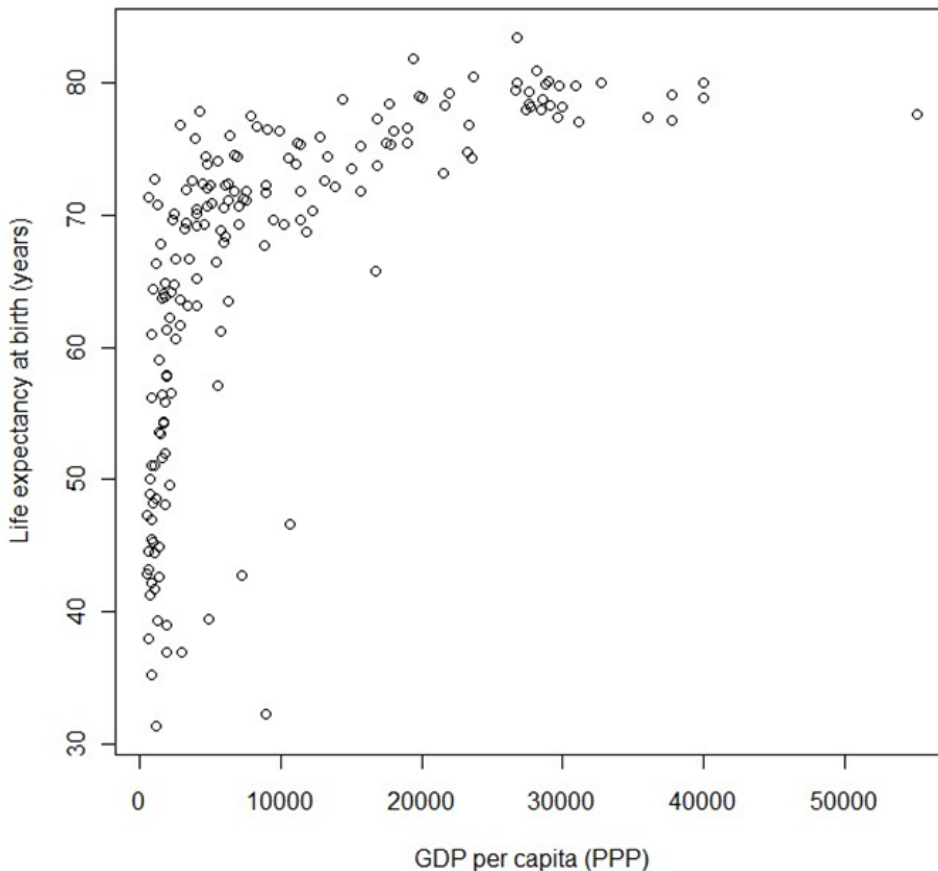
environments, such as traditionally long perpetuated indigenous ways of collective living. As the land of these nations is cemented, formerly rural farmers who now work in factories have no way to go back to their previous living. What if the factories are closed for whatever the reason?

The symbolic interaction perspective studies the day-to-day impact of global inequality, the meanings individuals attach to global stratification, and the subjective nature of poverty. Someone applying this view to global inequality would probably focus on understanding the difference between what someone living in a core nation defines as poverty (relative poverty, defined as being unable to live the lifestyle of the average person in your country) and what someone living in a peripheral nation defines as poverty (absolute poverty, defined as being barely able, or unable, to afford basic necessities, such as food).

## **Global Stratification**

While stratification in the United States refers to the unequal distribution of resources among individuals, **global stratification** refers to this unequal distribution among nations. There are two dimensions to this stratification: gaps between nations and gaps within nations. When it comes to global inequality, both economic inequality and social inequality may concentrate the burden of poverty among certain segments of the earth's population (Myrdal 1970). As shown below, people's life expectancy depends heavily on where they happen to be born.

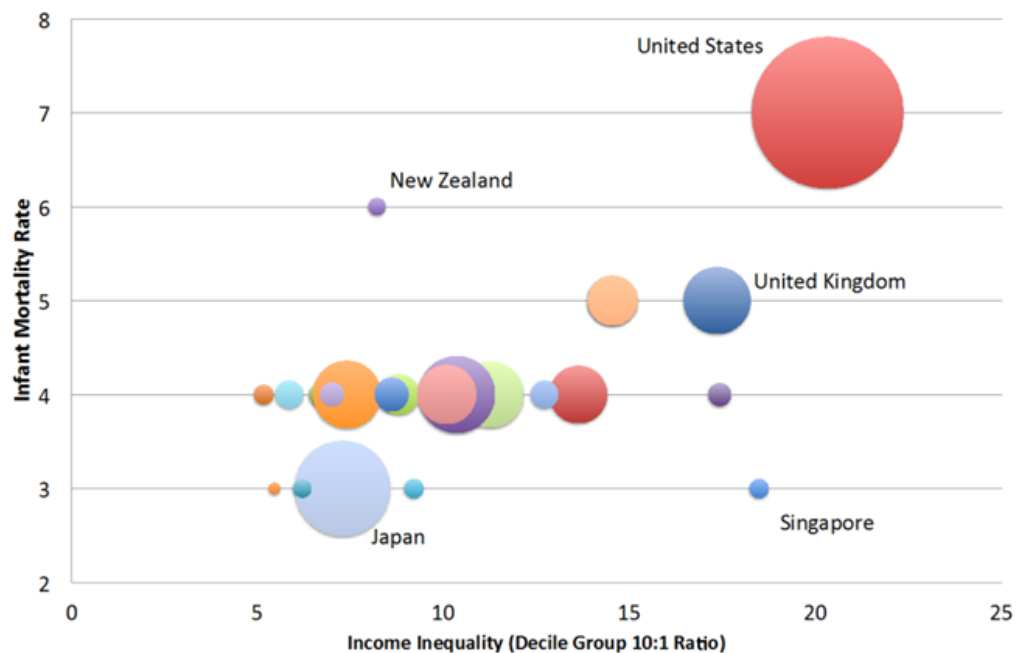
## **GDP per Capita and Life Expectancy**



Source: CIA Factbook (2003).

There is a positive relationship between the **GDP per capita and life expectancy**. It is positive because the two variables face the same direction, that is, *the richer* the nation, *the longer* its people's life expectancy tends to be. In the image above ("GDP per Capita and Life Expectancy"), the X axis (the horizontal line placed at the bottom) represents GDP per capita. The Y axis (the vertical line on the left) represents life expectancy. When the GDP per capita exceeds \$20,000, life expectancy can exceed 80 years. Below \$10,000, life expectancy ranges between 31.3 years (Mozambique) and 76.4 years (Chile). The highest GDP per capita (see the upper right) is not the U.S. (\$37,800), but Luxembourg (\$55,100). As discussed earlier, the value is the mean average based on the GDP, and average income is obtained not by the mean, which is biased, but by the median, the mid-value in a data set that cannot be affected by the highest value (such as Bill Gates) or the lowest value.

## Income Inequality and Infant Mortality Rate



Source: Cost of Living (2015).

There is also a positive relationship between **income inequality** and **infant mortality rate** (the number of babies who die early out of 1,000 newborn babies). That is, the more unequal the income distribution within a nation, the higher its infant mortality rate tends to be. In the image above, the X axis represents "income inequality" and the Y axis, "infant mortality rate." The size of circles shows the size of the GDP; the U.S. (placed on the upper right) is the largest. In terms of income inequality, though, the U.S. is the worst among the countries included in the data. In terms of infant mortality rate, the U.S. is the worst, as well. Except Singapore (lower right) and New Zealand (upper left), the positive relationship between income inequality and infant mortality rate is clearly seen.

Most of us are accustomed to thinking of global stratification as economic inequality. Social inequality, however, is just as harmful as economic discrepancies. Prejudice and discrimination—whether against a certain race, ethnicity, religion, or the like—can create and aggravate conditions of economic equality, both within and between nations. Think about the inequity that existed for decades within the nation of South Africa. Apartheid, one of the worst cases of institutionalized and legal racism, created a social inequality that gathered the world's condemnation.

Gender inequity is another global concern. Consider the controversy surrounding female genital mutilation (the removal of the clitoris from newborn baby girls practiced mostly by their family members). Nations that practice this female circumcision procedure, supported by cultural relativists, defend it as a longstanding cultural tradition in certain tribes and argue that the West shouldn't interfere. Western nations, however, decry the practice and are working to stop it.

Inequalities based on sexual orientation and gender identity exist around the globe. According to Amnesty International, a number of crimes are committed against individuals who do not conform to traditional gender roles or sexual orientations. From culturally sanctioned rape to state-sanctioned executions, the abuses are serious. These legalized and culturally accepted forms of prejudice and discrimination exist everywhere—from the United States to Somalia to Tibet—restricting the freedom of individuals and often putting their lives at risk (Amnesty International 2012).

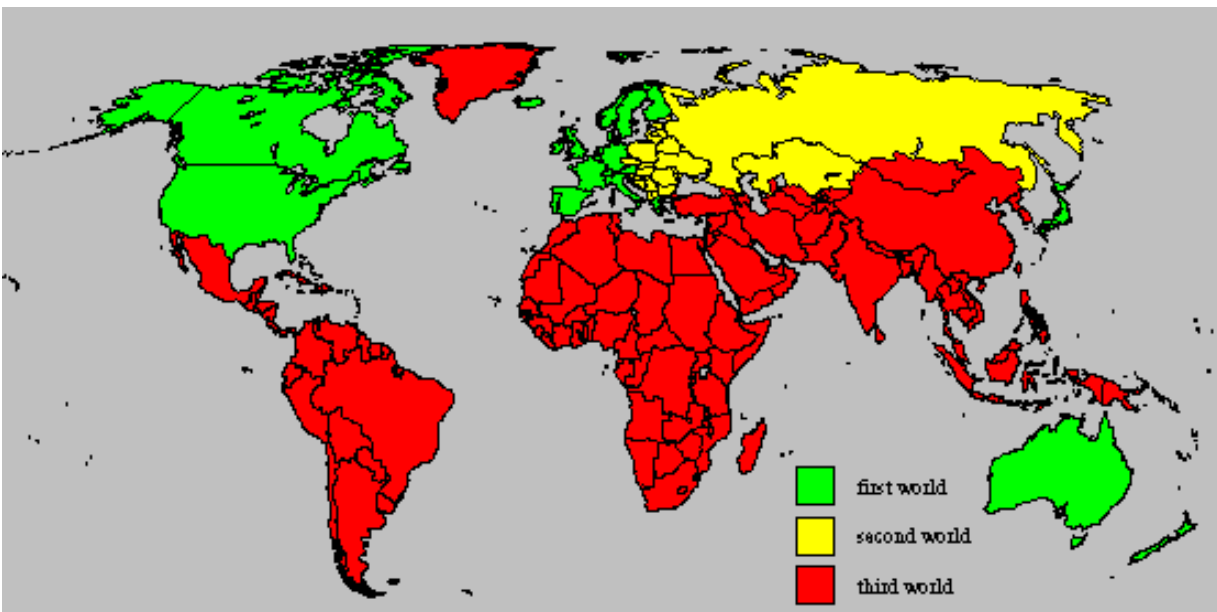
## **Global Classification**

A major concern when discussing global inequality is how to avoid an ethnocentric bias mistakenly assuming that less industrialized nations struggle to become more industrialized ones, like the United States. Terms such as developing (nonindustrialized) and developed (industrialized) sound like the labels judging the countries as inferior/superior. Over time, however, terminology has shifted to make way for a more inclusive view of the world.

## **Cold War Terminology**

Cold War terminology was developed during the Cold War era (1947-1991) that started right after World War II and ended for the collapse of the Soviet Union. It classifies countries into first world, second world, and third world nations. Capitalistic democracies led by the United States were considered the **first world**, including Western Europe and Japan. This is why the first world is also called the "Western Bloc"--although Japan is not

geographically located in the west. The **second world** was led by the Soviet Union and followed the communist ideology, including Eastern Europe. The second world is also called the "Eastern Bloc." China initially followed the Soviet Union as its "big brother," but, viewing the new world situation a quite different way, soon it declared that all other poor nations, which had been previously colonized and exploited by European countries and/or by the U.S., should unite into the **third world** that would be no longer ruled by the U.S. (the first world) or by the Soviet Union (the second world) (see, e.g., Saba 1980).



### Immanuel Wallerstein: World Systems Approach

Immanuel Wallerstein's (1979) world systems approach is based on the economic (rather than political) standing of nations. It views the world situation as economically hierarchical, consisting of core nations (the richest), peripheral nations (the poorest), and semi-peripheral nations (in-between).

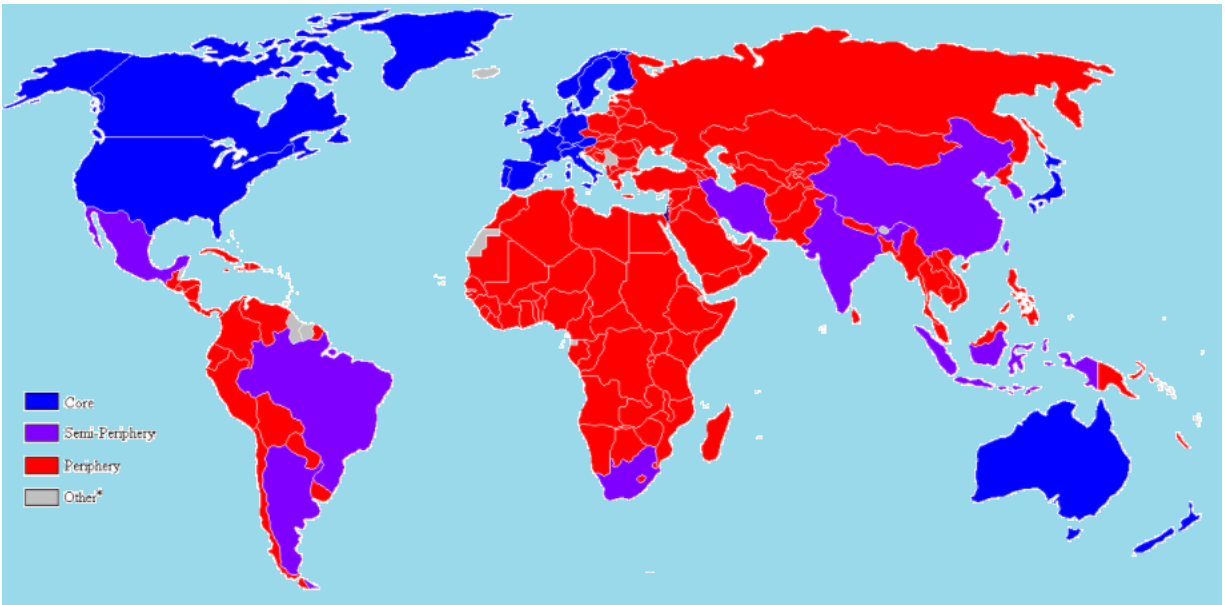
**Core nations** are dominant capitalist countries, highly industrialized, technological, and urbanized, almost identical with what the Cold War terminology calls the first world (compare the map shown above and that below). Core nations, especially the U.S., act as an economic powerhouse

exerting control over every aspect of the global economy and exploiting both semi-peripheral and peripheral nations. Free trade agreements, such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), can be seen as an example of how a core nation is able to leverage its power to gain the most advantageous position in the matter of global trade.

**Peripheral nations** are the least advanced ones, both economically and politically. All of them were previously colonized by European countries, the U.S., and/or Japan, and thus, are somewhat identical with the third world. Although at some point in history--mostly after WWII--they got independence, what's going on currently in these countries can be seen as neocolonialism, not much different from colonialism (which will be discussed in Ch. 17, Government and Politics). They thus tend to be placed under domination by core nations through puppet regimes--the situation which is called neocolonialism--and are politically unstable or even chaotic.

**Semi-peripheral nations** are in-between nations, not powerful enough to dictate policy but nevertheless acting as important sources for raw material and an expanding middle-class marketplace for core nations, while also exploiting peripheral nations. They were previously the third world, but grew economically, and are now placed between core nations and peripheral nations. Mexico is an example, providing abundant cheap labor to multinational corporations headquartered in the U.S., and such corporations import their own goods from Mexico to the U.S. with no tariff (import tax) thanks to the free trade agreement (NAFTA). To the extent they cut the wage cost, they make more profit, one of the major business strategies seen in neocolonialism.





## High-Income Nations

The World Bank defines high-income nations as having a gross national income of at least \$12,746 per capita. The OECD (Organization for Economic and Cooperative Development) countries make up a group of 34 economically advanced nations whose governments work together to promote economic growth and sustainability. According to the World Bank (2014b), in 2013, the average **gross domestic product (GDP) per capita** (see Ch. 8, Social Stratification in the U.S.) of the OECD countries was \$37,311, and the total population was over one billion (1.045 billion); on average, 81% of the population in these nations was urban.

High-income countries face two major issues: capital flight and deindustrialization. They are related to neocolonialism and problematic to core nation workers, because of which they lose their jobs. **Capital flight** refers to the movement (flight) of capital (business money) from one nation to another, as when General Motors automotive company closed U.S. factories in Michigan and opened factories in Mexico. **Deindustrialization**, a related issue, occurs as a consequence of capital flight, as no new companies open to replace jobs lost to foreign nations. As expected, global companies move their industrial processes to the places where they can get the most production with the least cost, including the building of

infrastructure, training of workers, shipping of goods, and, of course, paying employee wages.

**Note:**

Capital Flight, Outsourcing, and Jobs in the United States



This dilapidated auto supply store in Detroit is a victim of auto industry outsourcing.

(Photo courtesy of Bob Jagendorf/flickr)

Capital flight describes jobs and infrastructure moving from one nation to another. Look at the U.S. automobile industry. In the early twentieth century, the cars driven in the United States were made here, employing thousands of workers in Detroit and in the companies that produced everything that made building cars possible. However, once the fuel crisis of the 1970s hit and people in the United States increasingly looked to imported cars with better gas mileage, U.S. auto manufacturing began to decline. During the 2007–2009 recession, the U.S. government bailed out the three main auto companies, underscoring their vulnerability. At the same time, Japanese-owned Toyota and Honda and South Korean Kia maintained stable sales levels.

Capital flight also occurs when services (as opposed to manufacturing) are relocated. Chances are if you have called the tech support line for your cell

phone or Internet provider, you've spoken to someone halfway across the globe. This professional might tell you her name is Susan or Joan, but her accent makes it clear that her real name might be Parvati or Indira. It might be the middle of the night in that country, yet these service providers pick up the line saying, "Good morning," as though they are in the next town over. They know everything about your phone or your modem, often using a remote server to log in to your home computer to accomplish what is needed. These are the workers of the twenty-first century. They are not on factory floors or in traditional sweatshops; they are educated, speak at least two languages, and usually have significant technology skills. They are skilled workers, but they are paid a fraction of what similar workers are paid in the United States. For U.S. and multinational companies, the equation makes sense. India and other semi-peripheral countries have emerging infrastructures and education systems to fill their needs, without core nation costs.

As services are relocated, so are jobs. In the United States, unemployment is high. Many college-educated people are unable to find work, and those with only a high school diploma are in even worse shape. We have, as a country, outsourced ourselves out of jobs, and not just menial jobs, but white-collar work as well. But before we complain too bitterly, we must look at the culture of consumerism that we embrace. A flat screen television that might have cost \$1,000 a few years ago is now \$350. That cost savings has to come from somewhere. When consumers seek the lowest possible price, shop at big box stores for the biggest discount they can get, and generally ignore other factors in exchange for low cost, they are building the market for outsourcing. And as the demand is built, the market will ensure it is met, even at the expense of the people who wanted it in the first place.



Is this international call center the wave of the future? (Photo courtesy of Vilma.com/flickr)

## Middle-Income Nations

The World Bank defines middle-income economies areas those with a GNI per capita of more than \$1,045 but less than \$12,746. According to the World Bank (2014), in 2013, the average GNI per capita of an upper middle income nation was \$7,594 per capita with a total population of 2.049 billion, of which 62 percent was urban. Thailand, China, and Namibia are examples of middle-income nations (World Bank 2014a).

Perhaps the most pressing issue for middle-income nations is the problem of debt accumulation. As the name suggests, **debt accumulation** is the buildup of external debt, wherein countries borrow money from other nations to fund their expansion or growth goals. As the uncertainties of the global economy make repaying these debts, or even paying the interest on them, more challenging, nations can find themselves in trouble. Once global markets have reduced the value of a country's goods, it can be very difficult to ever manage the debt burden. Such issues have plagued middle-income countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as East Asian and Pacific nations (Dogruel and Dogruel 2007). By way of example, even in

the European Union, which is composed of more core nations than semi-peripheral nations, the semi-peripheral nations of Italy and Greece face increasing debt burdens. The economic downturns in both Greece and Italy still threaten the economy of the entire European Union.

## **Low-Income Nations**

The World Bank defines low-income countries as nations whose per capita GNI was \$1,045 per capita or less in 2013. According to the World Bank (2014a), in 2013, the average per capita GNI of a low-income nation was \$528 per capita and the total population was 796,261,360, with 28 percent located in urban areas. For example, Myanmar, Ethiopia, and Somalia are considered low-income countries. Low-income economies are primarily found in Asia and Africa (World Bank 2014a), where most of the world's population lives. There are two major challenges that these countries face: women are disproportionately affected by poverty (in a trend toward a global feminization of poverty) and much of the population lives in absolute poverty.

## **Summary**

Stratification refers to the gaps in resources both between nations and within nations. While economic equality is of great concern, so is social equality, like the discrimination stemming from race, ethnicity, gender, religion, and/or sexual orientation. While global inequality is nothing new, several factors make it more relevant than ever, like the global marketplace and the pace of information sharing. Researchers try to understand global inequality by classifying it according to factors such as how industrialized a nation is, whether a country serves as a means of production or as an owner, and what income a nation produces.

## **Further Research**

To learn more about the United Nations Millennium Development Goals, look here: [http://openstaxcollege.org/1/UN\\_development\\_goals](http://openstaxcollege.org/1/UN_development_goals)

To learn more about the existence and impact of global poverty, peruse the data here: [http://openstaxcollege.org/l/poverty\\_data](http://openstaxcollege.org/l/poverty_data)

## References

Amnesty International. 2012. "Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity." Retrieved January 3, 2012 (<http://www.amnesty.org/en/sexual-orientation-and-gender-identity>).

Central Intelligence Agency. 2012. "The World Factbook." Retrieved January 5, 2012.

Central Intelligence Agency. 2014. "Country Comparison: Infant Mortality Rate." Retrieved November 7, 2014.

CIA Factbook. 2003. "GDP per Capita and Life Expectancy." (<https://www.indexmundi.com/g/correlation.aspx?v1=30&v2=67&y=2003&l=en>).

Cost of Living. 2015. "Income Inequality and Infant Mortality Rate."

Dogrue, Fatma, and A. Suut Dogrue. 2007. "Foreign Debt Dynamics in Middle Income Countries." Paper presented January 4, 2007 at Middle East Economic Association Meeting, Allied Social Science Associations, Chicago, IL.

Moghadam, Valentine M. 2005. "The Feminization of Poverty and Women's Human Rights." Gender Equality and Development Section UNESCO, July. Paris, France.

Myrdal, Gunnar. 1970. *The Challenge of World Poverty: A World Anti-Poverty Program in Outline*. New York: Pantheon.

Oxfam. 2014. "Working for the Few: Political Capture and Economic Inequality." Oxfam.org. Retrieved November 7, 2014.

Saba, Paul. 1980. "On the Counter-Revolutionary Theory of the Three Worlds." *Red Dawn* No. 3, January.

United Nations. 2013. "Millennium Development Goals." Retrieved November 7, 2014 (<http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/bkgd.shtml>).

Wallerstein, Immanuel. 1979. *The Capitalist World Economy*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge World Press.

World Bank. 2014a. "Gender Overview." Retrieved November 7, 2014 (<http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/gender/overview#1>).

World Bank. 2014b. "High Income: OECD: Data." Retrieved November 7, 2014 (<http://data.worldbank.org/income-level/OEC>).

World Bank. 2014c. "Low Income: Data." Retrieved November 7, 2014 (<http://data.worldbank.org/income-level/LIC>).

World Bank. 2014d. "Upper Middle Income: Data." Retrieved November 7, 2014 (<http://data.worldbank.org/income-level/UMC>).

## **Glossary**

### **capital flight**

the movement (flight) of capital from one nation to another, via jobs and resources

### **core nations**

dominant capitalist countries

### **debt accumulation**

the buildup of external debt, wherein countries borrow money from other nations to fund their expansion or growth goals

### **deindustrialization**

the loss of industrial production, usually to peripheral and semi-peripheral nations where the costs are lower

### **first world**

a term from the Cold War era that is used to describe industrialized capitalist democracies

fourth world

a term that describes stigmatized minority groups who have no voice or representation on the world stage

GINI coefficient

a measure of income inequality between countries using a 100-point scale, in which 1 represents complete equality and 100 represents the highest possible inequality

global inequality

the concentration of resources in core nations and in the hands of a wealthy minority

global feminization of poverty

a pattern that occurs when women bear a disproportionate percentage of the burden of poverty

global stratification

the unequal distribution of resources between countries

gross national income (GNI)

the income of a nation calculated based on goods and services produced, plus income earned by citizens and corporations headquartered in that country

peripheral nations

nations on the fringes of the global economy, dominated by core nations, with very little industrialization

second world

a term from the Cold War era that describes nations with moderate economies and standards of living

semi-peripheral nations

in-between nations, not powerful enough to dictate policy but acting as a major source of raw materials and an expanding middle class marketplace



third world

a term from the Cold War era that refers to poor, unindustrialized countries

## Global Wealth and Poverty

- Understand the differences between relative, absolute, and subjective poverty
- Describe the economic situation of some of the world's most impoverished areas
- Explain the cyclical impact of the consequences of poverty



How poor is poor for these  
beggar children in Vietnam?  
(Photo courtesy of  
Augapfel/flickr)

## Poverty

Roughly saying, there are two types of poverty: relative poverty and absolute poverty. **Relative poverty** is a state of living where people can afford necessities but are unable to meet their society's average standard of living. People often disparage “keeping up with the Joneses”—the idea that you must keep up with the neighbors’ standard of living to not feel deprived. But it is true that you might feel “poor” if you are living without a car to drive to and from work, without any money for a safety net should a family member fall ill, and without any “extras” beyond just making ends meet.

**Absolute poverty** is the condition in which the basic needs cannot be met, the basic needs including food, clean water, safe housing, and access to healthcare. Currently, about 17% of people in peripheral nations are dipped in absolute poverty. In the U.S., one of the richest countries in the world? It's between 12% and 15%...(see below)

### **War on Poverty in the U.S.**

In the 1960s, when President Johnson declared “war on poverty,” the U.S. government began defining “poverty” based on “total annual income for a family of four below which basic needs cannot be met.” The poverty line (or “poverty threshold”) for 2016 was set at \$24,563 (The U.S. Census Bureau 2016). Since the 1960s, the poverty rates ranged between 12% and 15% of the population, or between 36 million and 45 million people, a larger number than the entire population of the poorest countries in the world, such as Zimbabwe (14.15 million), Burundi (10.16 million), and Liberia (4 million). Hence, saying that the United States is a rich country is misleading. The gap between the rich and the poor is too big.



Slums in India illustrate  
absolute poverty all too well.  
(Photo courtesy of Emmanuelle  
Dyan/flickr)

**Note:**

**The Underground Economy Around the World**

What do the driver of an unlicensed hack cab in New York, a piecework seamstress working from her home in Mumbai, and a street tortilla vendor in Mexico City have in common? They are all members of the **underground economy**, a loosely defined unregulated market unhindered by taxes, government permits, or human protections. Official statistics before the worldwide recession posit that the underground economy accounted for over 50 percent of nonagricultural work in Latin America; the figure went as high as 80 percent in parts of Asia and Africa (Chen 2001). A recent article in the *Wall Street Journal* discusses the challenges, parameters, and surprising benefits of this informal marketplace. The wages earned in most underground economy jobs, especially in peripheral nations, are a pittance—a few rupees for a handmade bracelet at a market, or maybe 250 rupees (\$5 U.S.) for a day's worth of fruit and vegetable sales (Barta 2009). But these tiny sums mark the difference between survival and extinction for the world's poor.

The underground economy has never been viewed very positively by global economists. After all, its members don't pay taxes, don't take out loans to grow their businesses, and rarely earn enough to put money back into the economy in the form of consumer spending. But according to the International Labor Organization (an agency of the United Nations), some 52 million people worldwide will lose their jobs due to the ongoing worldwide recession. And while those in core nations know that high unemployment rates and limited government safety nets can be frightening, their situation is nothing compared to the loss of a job for those barely eking out an existence. Once that job disappears, the chance of staying afloat is very slim.

Within the context of this recession, some see the underground economy as a key player in keeping people alive. Indeed, an economist at the World Bank credits jobs created by the informal economy as a primary reason why peripheral nations are not in worse shape during this recession. Women in particular benefit from the informal sector. The majority of economically active women in peripheral nations are engaged in the informal sector, which is somewhat buffered from the economic downturn. The flip side, of course, is that it is equally buffered from the possibility of economic growth.

Even in the United States, the informal economy exists, although not on the same scale as in peripheral and semi-peripheral nations. It might include under-the-table nannies, gardeners, and housecleaners, as well as unlicensed street vendors and taxi drivers. There are also those who run informal businesses, like daycares or salons, from their houses. Analysts estimate that this type of labor may make up 10 percent of the overall U.S. economy, a number that will likely grow as companies reduce head counts, leaving more workers to seek other options. In the end, the article suggests that, whether selling medicinal wines in Thailand or woven bracelets in India, the workers of the underground economy at least have what most people want most of all: a chance to stay afloat (Barta 2009).

## **Who Are the Impoverished?**

Who are the impoverished? Who is living in absolute poverty? The truth that most of us would guess that the richest countries are often those with the least people. Compare the United States, which possesses a relatively small slice of the population pie and owns by far the largest slice of the wealth pie, with India. These disparities have the expected consequence. The poorest people in the world are women and those in peripheral and semi-peripheral nations. For women, the rate of poverty is particularly worsened by the pressure on their time. In general, time is one of the few luxuries the very poor have, but study after study has shown that women in poverty, who are responsible for all family comforts as well as any earnings they can make, have less of it. The result is that while men and women may have the same rate of economic poverty, women are suffering more in terms of overall wellbeing (Buvinic 1997). It is harder for females to get credit to expand businesses, to take the time to learn a new skill, or to spend extra hours improving their craft so as to be able to earn at a higher rate.

## **Global Feminization of Poverty**

In some ways, the phrase "global feminization of poverty" says it all: around the world, women are bearing a disproportionate percentage of the

burden of poverty. This means more women live in poor conditions, receive inadequate healthcare, bear the brunt of malnutrition and inadequate drinking water, and so on. Throughout the 1990s, data indicated that while overall poverty rates were rising, especially in peripheral nations, the rates of impoverishment increased for women nearly 20 percent more than for men (Mogadham 2005).

While women are living longer and healthier lives today compared to ten years ago, around the world many women are denied basic rights, particularly in the workplace. In peripheral nations, they accumulate fewer assets, farm less land, make less money, and face restricted civil rights and liberties. Women can stimulate the economic growth of peripheral nations, but they are often undereducated and lack access to credit needed to start small businesses.

In 2013, the United Nations assessed its progress toward achieving its Millennium Development Goals. Goal 3 was to promote gender equality and empower women, and there were encouraging advances in this area. While women's employment outside the agricultural sector remains under 20 percent in Western Asia, Northern Africa, and Southern Asia, worldwide it increased from 35–40 percent over the twenty-year period ending in 2010 (United Nations 2013).

## **Africa**

The majority of the poorest countries in the world are in Africa. That is not to say there is not diversity within the countries of that continent; countries like South Africa and Egypt have much lower rates of poverty than Angola and Ethiopia, for instance. Overall, African income levels have been dropping relative to the rest of the world, meaning that Africa as a whole is getting relatively poorer. Making the problem worse, 2014 saw an outbreak of the *Ebola* virus in western Africa, leading to a public health crisis and an economic downturn due to loss of workers and tourist dollars.

Why is Africa in such dire straits? Much of the continent's poverty can be traced to the availability of land, especially arable land (land that can be

farmed). Centuries of struggle over land ownership have meant that much useable land has been ruined or left unfarmed, while many countries with inadequate rainfall have never set up an infrastructure to irrigate. Many of Africa's natural resources were long ago taken by colonial forces, leaving little agricultural and mineral wealth on the continent.

Further, African poverty is worsened by civil wars and inadequate governance that are the result of a continent re-imagined with artificial colonial borders and leaders. Consider the example of Rwanda. There, two ethnic groups cohabitated with their own system of hierarchy and management until Belgians took control of the country in 1915 and rigidly confined members of the population into two unequal ethnic groups. While, historically, members of the Tutsi group held positions of power, the involvement of Belgians led to the Hutu's seizing power during a 1960s revolt. This ultimately led to a repressive government and genocide against Tutsis that left hundreds of thousands of Rwandans dead or living in diaspora (U.S. Department of State 2011c). The painful rebirth of a self-ruled Africa has meant many countries bear ongoing scars as they try to see their way towards the future (World Poverty 2012a).

## **Asia**

While the majority of the world's poorest countries are in Africa, the majority of the world's poorest people are in Asia. As in Africa, Asia finds itself with disparity in the distribution of poverty, with Japan and South Korea holding much more wealth than India and Cambodia. In fact, most poverty is concentrated in South Asia. One of the most pressing causes of poverty in Asia is simply the pressure that the size of the population puts on its resources. In fact, many believe that China's success in recent times has much to do with its draconian population control rules. According to the U.S. State department, China's market-oriented reforms have contributed to its significant reduction of poverty and the speed at which it has experienced an increase in income levels (U.S. Department of State 2011b). However, every part of Asia is feeling the current global recession, from the poorest countries whose aid packages will be hit, to the more industrialized ones whose own industries are slowing down. These factors make the

poverty on the ground unlikely to improve any time soon (World Poverty 2012b).

## **MENA**

The Middle East and North Africa region (MENA) includes oil-rich countries in the Gulf, such as Iran, Iraq, and Kuwait, but also countries that are relatively resource-poor in relationship to their populations, such as Morocco and Yemen. These countries are predominately Islamic. For the last quarter-century, economic growth was slower in MENA than in other developing economies, and almost a quarter of the 300 million people who make up the population live on less than \$2.00 a day (World Bank 2013).

The International Labour Organization tracks the way income inequality influences social unrest. The two regions with the highest risk of social unrest are Sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East-North Africa region (International Labour Organization 2012). Increasing unemployment and high socioeconomic inequality in MENA were major factors in the Arab Spring, which—beginning in 2010—toppled dictatorships throughout the Middle East in favor of democratically elected government; unemployment and income inequalities are still being blamed on immigrants, foreign nationals, and ethnic/religious minorities.

## **Sweatshops**

USAS—United Students Against Sweatshops--is a non-governmental organization founded in 1997 and run by U.S. students who watch what's going on in sweatshops, factories run in peripheral and semi-peripheral nations by multinational corporations headquartered in core nations. They are angry and have waged countless battles against both apparel makers and other multinational corporations that do not meet what USAS considers fair working conditions and wages (USAS 2009). "Fair working conditions and wages"? See below.



### Sweatshops Wages in 2003

	Hourly Wage in U.S. \$
Bangladesh	\$0.13
China	0.44
Costa Rica	2.38
Dominican Republic	1.62
El Salvador	1.38
Haiti	0.49
Honduras	1.31
Indonesia	0.34
Nicaragua	0.76
Vietnam	0.26

Source: Powell *et al.* (2006, p. 265)

Employees in sweatshops work for long hours at low wages and under unhealthy or even dangerous conditions. Well-known companies that run sweatshops include: H&M, Nike, Walmart, Gap, Disney, Sears, and so forth. The capitalist golden rule is: the lower the wages, the higher the profits.

	INJURY	COMPENSATION
 or 	Loss of a thumb, or any finger past a joint	6 months' salary
	Two fingers	10 months' salary
 or 	Four fingers, or a thumb and three fingers	14 months' salary and 70% pay through retirement age
 or  or 	Forearm, or both thumbs	18 months' salary and 75% pay through retirement age
 or  or 	An arm, or hand and the thumb on opposite hand	20 months' salary and 80% pay through retirement age

Source: Zhejiang Department of Labor Social Security

Yongkang, the hardware capital of China, has 7,000 factories run by giant corporations from powerful countries, such as Wal-Mart, Disney, Dell, and so on. Yongkang means "eternal health" in Chinese. As shown above ("The Price of a Finger"), it is also the dismemberment capital: there are 2,500 accidents each year and thousands more that are unreported (Wong 2005). Young migrants are hired at the train station to run metal stampers, molders,

and high-pressure hammers driven by fly- wheels. Few workers last a month.

Not just risks to health and safety, this feature of global commerce also completely disrupts indigenous activities such as rural agriculture and crafts, disassembling the village and family systems which have been essential features of the socioeconomic fabric of host countries (Baram 2009). The land, previously farmed, has been cemented for factories to run, factories which keep polluting the water, the air, and the rest of the land.

## **Consequences of Poverty**



For this child at a refugee camp  
in Ethiopia, poverty and  
malnutrition are a way of life.  
(Photo courtesy of DFID - UK  
Department for International  
Development/flickr)

Not surprisingly, the consequences of poverty are often also causes. The poor often experience inadequate healthcare, limited education, and the inaccessibility of birth control. But those born into these conditions are

incredibly challenged in their efforts to break out since these consequences of poverty are also causes of poverty, perpetuating a cycle of disadvantage.

According to sociologists Neckerman and Torche (2007) in their analysis of global inequality studies, the consequences of poverty are many. Neckerman and Torche have divided them into three areas. The first, termed “the sedimentation of global inequality,” relates to the fact that once poverty becomes entrenched in an area, it is typically very difficult to reverse. As mentioned above, poverty exists in a cycle where the consequences and causes are intertwined. The second consequence of poverty is its effect on physical and mental health. Poor people face physical health challenges, including malnutrition and high infant mortality rates. Mental health is also detrimentally affected by the emotional stresses of poverty, with relative deprivation carrying the most robust effect. Again, as with the ongoing inequality, the effects of poverty on mental and physical health become more entrenched as time goes on. Neckerman and Torche’s third consequence of poverty is the prevalence of crime. Cross-nationally, crime rates are higher, particularly for violent crime, in countries with higher levels of income inequality (Fajnzylber, Lederman, and Loayza 2002).

## Slavery

**Chattel slavery** is a form of slavery, once practiced in the American South, in which one person owns another as property. Child slavery, which may include child prostitution, is chattel slavery. In **debt bondage**, or bonded labor, the poor pledge themselves as servants in exchange for the cost of basic necessities like transportation, room, and board. In this scenario, people are paid less than they are charged for room and board. When travel is required, they can arrive in debt for their travel expenses and be unable to work their way free, since their wages do not allow them to ever get ahead. In the nineteenth century, many Europeans unable to buy the ticket to cross the Atlantic Ocean migrated to the U.S. as “indentured servants,” the same as debt bondage.

There are tens of millions of people trapped in various forms of slavery in today’s world. Of them, 78% are labor slaves and 22%, sex slaves. And of them, 26% are children (freetheslaves.net). Also, in the privatized U.S.

prisons, prisoners are treated as if they were slave laborers whose average of maximum wages are \$4.73 per day (prisonpolicy.org).

The global watchdog group Anti-Slavery International recognizes other forms of slavery: human trafficking (in which people are moved away from their communities and forced to work against their will), child domestic work and child labor, and certain forms of servile marriage, in which women are little more than chattel slaves (Anti-Slavery International 2012).

## **Summary**

When looking at the world's poor, we first have to define the difference between relative poverty, absolute poverty, and subjective poverty. While those in relative poverty might not have enough to live at their country's standard of living, those in absolute poverty do not have, or barely have, basic necessities such as food. Subjective poverty has more to do with one's perception of one's situation. North America and Europe are home to fewer of the world's poor than Africa, which has most poor countries, or Asia, which has the most people living in poverty. Poverty has numerous negative consequences, from increased crime rates to a detrimental impact on physical and mental health.

## **Further Research**

Students often think that the United States is immune to the atrocity of human trafficking. Check out the following link to learn more about trafficking in the United States:

[http://openstaxcollege.org/l/human\\_trafficking\\_in\\_US](http://openstaxcollege.org/l/human_trafficking_in_US)

For more information about the ongoing practices of slavery in the modern world click here: <http://openstaxcollege.org/l/anti-slavery>.

## **References**

Anti-Slavery International. 2012. "What Is Modern Slavery?" Retrieved January 1, 2012

([http://www.antislavery.org/english/slavery\\_today/what\\_is\\_modern\\_slavery.aspx](http://www.antislavery.org/english/slavery_today/what_is_modern_slavery.aspx)).

Baram, Michael. 2009. "Globalization and Workplace Hazards in Developing Nations." *Safety Science* Volume 47, Issue 6, pp. 756–766.

Barta, Patrick. 2009. "The Rise of the Underground." *Wall Street Journal*, March 14. Retrieved January 1, 2012 (<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB123698646833925567.html>).

Buvinić, M. 1997. "Women in Poverty: A New Global Underclass." *Foreign Policy*, Fall (108):1–7.

Chen, Martha. 2001. "Women in the Informal Sector: A Global Picture, the Global Movement." *The SAIS Review* 21:71–82

Fajnzylber, Pablo, Daniel Lederman, and Norman Loayza. 2002. "Inequality and Violent Crime." *Journal of Law and Economics* 45:1–40.

freetheslaves.net. "Slavery Today." ([www.freetheslaves.net/about-slavery/slavery-today/](http://www.freetheslaves.net/about-slavery/slavery-today/)).

International Labour Organization. 2012. "High Unemployment and Growing Inequality Fuel Social Unrest around the World." Retrieved November 7, 2014 ([http://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/comment-analysis/WCMS\\_179430/lang--en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/comment-analysis/WCMS_179430/lang--en/index.htm)).

Neckerman, Kathryn, and Florencia Torche. 2007. "Inequality: Causes and Consequences." *Annual Review of Sociology* 33:335–357.

Powell, Benjamin and David Skarbek. 2006. "Sweatshops and Third World Living Standards: Are the Jobs Worth the Sweat?" *Journal of Labor Research* 27:2. 263-274.

prisonpolicy.org. "Section III: Prison Economy." (<https://www.prisonpolicy.org/prisonindex/prisonlabor.html>).

Shah, Anup. 2011. "Poverty around the World." Global Issues. Retrieved January 17, 2012 (<http://www.globalissues.org/print/article/4>).

U.S. Department of State. 2011a. "Background Note: Argentina." Retrieved January 3, 2012 (<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/26516.htm>).

U.S. Department of State. 2011b. "Background Note: China." Retrieved January 3, 2012 (<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/18902.htm#econ>).

U.S. Department of State. 2011c. "Background Note: Rwanda." Retrieved January 3, 2012 (<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2861.htm#econ>).

USAS. 2009. "Mission, Vision and Organizing Philosophy." August. Retrieved January 2, 2012 (<http://usas.org>).

U.S. Census Bureau. 2016. "Poverty Thresholds." (<https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/income-poverty/historical-poverty-thresholds.html>).

Wong, Ping. 2005. "The Price of a Finger." *Mānoa*, Vol. 17, No. 1, Blood Ties: Writing Across Chinese Borders (Summer).

World Bank. 2013. "Middle East and North Africa." Retrieved November 7, 2014 (<http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/COUNTRIES/MENAEXT/0,,menuPK:247619~pagePK:146748~piPK:146812~theSitePK:256299,0.html>).

World Bank. 2014e. "Poverty Overview." Retrieved November 7, 2014 (<http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/poverty/overview>).

World Poverty. 2012a. "Poverty in Africa, Famine and Disease." Retrieved January 2, 2012 (<http://world-poverty.org/povertyinafrica.aspx>).

World Poverty. 2012b "Poverty in Asia, Caste and Progress." Retrieved January 2, 2012 (<http://world-poverty.org/povertyinasia.aspx>).

World Poverty. 2012c. "Poverty in Latin America, Foreign Aid Debt Burdens." Retrieved January 2, 2012 (<http://world-poverty.org/povertyinlatinamerica.aspx>).

## **Glossary**

absolute poverty

the state where one is barely able, or unable, to afford basic necessities

chattel slavery

a form of slavery in which one person owns another

debt bondage

the act of people pledging themselves as servants in exchange for money for passage, and are subsequently paid too little to regain their freedom

relative poverty

the state of poverty where one is unable to live the lifestyle of the average person in the country

subjective poverty

a state of poverty composed of many dimensions, subjectively present when one's actual income does not meet one's expectations

underground economy

an unregulated economy of labor and goods that operates outside of governance, regulatory systems, or human protections

## Theoretical Perspectives on Global Stratification

- Describe the modernization and dependency theory perspectives on global stratification

As with any social issue, global or otherwise, scholars have developed a variety of theories to study global stratification. The two most widely applied perspectives are modernization theory and dependency theory.

### Modernization Theory

According to **modernization theory**, low-income countries are affected by their lack of industrialization and can improve their global economic standing through (Armer and Katsillis 2010):

1. an adjustment of cultural values and attitudes to work
2. industrialization and other forms of economic growth

Critics point out the inherent ethnocentric bias of this theory. It erroneously supposes all countries have the same resources and are capable of following the same path. In addition, it assumes that the goal of all countries is to be as “developed” as possible. There is no room in this theory to consider if industrialization and technology are actually the best choices for all humans to follow.

There is, of course, some basis for this assumption. Data show that core nations tend to have lower maternal and child mortality rates, longer life spans, and less absolute poverty. It is also true that in the poorest countries, millions of people die from the lack of clean drinking water and sanitation facilities, which are benefits most of us take for granted. At the same time, the issue is more complex than the numbers might suggest. Cultural equality, history, community, and local traditions are all at risk as modernization pushes into peripheral countries. The challenge, then, is to allow the benefits of modernization while maintaining a cultural sensitivity to what already exists.

### Dependency Theory



**Dependency theory** can be understood as a critical response to the Euro-centric mindset of modernization theory. It states that global inequality is primarily caused by core nations (or high-income nations) exploiting semi-peripheral and peripheral nations (or middle-income and low-income nations), which creates a cycle of dependence (Hendricks 2010). As long as peripheral nations are dependent on core nations for economic stimulus and access to a larger piece of the global economy, they will never achieve stable and consistent economic growth. Further, the theory states that since core nations, as well as the World Bank, choose which countries to make loans to, and for what they will loan funds, they are creating highly segmented labor markets that are built to benefit the dominant market countries.

## Summary

Modernization theory and dependency theory are two of the most common lenses sociologists use when looking at the issues of global inequality. Modernization theory posits that countries go through evolutionary stages and that industrialization and improved technology are the keys to forward movement. Dependency theory, on the other hand, sees modernization theory as Eurocentric and patronizing. With this theory, global inequality is the result of core nations creating a cycle of dependence by exploiting resources and labor in peripheral and semi-peripheral countries.

## Further Research

For more information about economic modernization, check out the Hudson Institute at [http://openstaxcollege.org/l/Hudson\\_Institute](http://openstaxcollege.org/l/Hudson_Institute)

Learn more about economic dependency at the University of Texas Inequality Project: [http://openstaxcollege.org/l/Texas\\_inequality\\_project](http://openstaxcollege.org/l/Texas_inequality_project)

## References

Armer, J. Michael, and John Katsillis. 2010. "Modernization Theory." *Encyclopedia of Sociology*, edited by E. F. Borgatta. Retrieved January 5,

2012

(<http://edu.learnsoc.org/Chapters/3%20theories%20of%20sociology/11%20modernization%20theory.htm>).

Hendricks, John. 2010. "Dependency Theory." *Encyclopedia of Sociology*, edited by E.F. Borgatta. Retrieved January 5, 2012

(<http://edu.learnsoc.org/Chapters/3%20theories%20of%20sociology/5%20dependency%20theory.htm>).

## **Glossary**

dependency theory

a theory which states that global inequity is due to the exploitation of peripheral and semi-peripheral nations by core nations

modernization theory

a theory that low-income countries can improve their global economic standing by industrialization of infrastructure and a shift in cultural attitudes towards work

## Introduction to Race and Ethnicity

class="introduction"

Do you  
think race  
played a role  
in Trayvon  
Martin's  
death or in  
the public  
reaction to  
it? Do you  
think race  
had any  
influence on  
the initial  
decision not  
to arrest  
George  
Zimmerman,  
or on his  
later  
acquittal?  
(Photo  
courtesy of  
Ryan  
Vaarsi/flickr  
)



Trayvon Martin was a seventeen-year-old black teenager. On the evening of February 26, 2012, he was visiting with his father and his father's fiancée in the Sanford, Florida multi-ethnic gated community where his father's fiancée lived. Trayvon left her home on foot to buy a snack from a nearby convenience store. As he was returning, George Zimmerman, a white Hispanic male and the community's neighborhood watch program coordinator, noticed him. In light of a recent rash of break-ins, Zimmerman called the police to report a person acting suspiciously, which he had done on many other occasions. The 911 operator told Zimmerman not to follow the teen, but soon after Zimmerman and Trayvon had a physical confrontation. According to Zimmerman, Trayvon attacked him, and in the ensuing scuffle Trayvon was shot and killed (CNN Library 2014).

A public outcry followed Martin's death. There were allegations of **racial profiling**—the use by law enforcement of race alone to determine whether to stop and detain someone—a national discussion about “Stand Your Ground Laws,” and a failed lawsuit in which Zimmerman accused NBC of airing an edited version of the 911 call that made him appear racist. Zimmerman was not arrested until April 11, when he was charged with second-degree murder by special prosecutor Angela Corey. In the ensuing trial, he was found not guilty (CNN Library 2014).

The shooting, the public response, and the trial that followed offer a snapshot of the sociology of race. Do you think race played a role in

Martin's death or in the public reaction to it? Do you think race had any influence on the initial decision not to arrest Zimmerman, or on his later acquittal? Does society fear black men, leading to racial profiling at an institutional level? What about the role of the media? Was there a deliberate attempt to manipulate public opinion? If you were a member of the jury, would you have convicted George Zimmerman?

## **Glossary**

racial profiling

the use by law enforcement of race alone to determine whether to stop and detain someone

## Racial, Ethnic, and Minority Groups

- Understand the difference between race and ethnicity
- Define a majority group (dominant group)
- Define a minority group (subordinate group)

Studying race is difficult. Although **race** is about our biological traits, such as skin color and the shape of eyes, the social reality related to race, which is the main focus of sociological studies of race, stems NOT from our biological traits, BUT from socially constructed images and meanings attached to our biological traits as symbols. Recall that our behaviors and attitudes are shaped by our social conditions and locations including race and ethnicity, not by our biological traits or DNA.

Unlike race, ethnicity is sociologically more straightforward. **Ethnicity** is about culture, such as customs, values, and norms. These are themselves the social reality.

The United States is the nation that has been built by generations of immigrants--except Native Americans. President John F. Kennedy, for example, was the third generation of an Irish immigrant family, and President Donald Trump is also the third generation of a mixture of German and Scotch immigrants.

Of course, most immigrants are not as successful as JFK or DT. Chances are, quite the contrary, many of them face hardships as minorities in bitter race and ethnic issues. To be noted, though, such issues in the U.S. do not pop up in a vacuum. They have history based upon **immigration** behind them, very cacophonous history that helps us better understand the meanings of such issues.

The term **minorities** indicates subordinate people who have less power than the majority. Yes, it is power--social, economic, and political--that distinguishes between minorities and the majority, not the size in number. In South Africa, for example, the number of whites is smaller than that of blacks, but as whites have way more power than blacks, they are considered the majority and blacks, minorities.

## What Is Race?

Social science organizations in the U.S. including the American Association of Anthropologists, the American Sociological Association, and the American Psychological Association have all taken an official position rejecting the biological explanations of race. Over time, the typology of race that developed during early racial science has fallen into disuse, and the **social construction of race** is a more sociological way of understanding racial categories. Today's social scientists suggest that race is not biologically identifiable and that previous racial categories, not based upon scientific data, erroneously supported racial prejudice (Omi and Winant 1994; Graves 2003).

The social construction of race is also reflected in the way names for racial categories change with changing times. It's worth noting that race, in this sense, is also a system of labeling that provides a source of identity; specific labels fall in and out of favor during different social eras. For example, the category "negroid," popular in the nineteenth century, evolved into the term "negro" by the 1960s, and then this term fell from use and was replaced with "black" that was soon replaced, again, by "African American." The name is not an objective fact but a subjective idea that can change, and, hence, the racial reality is the social reality.

Since 1960, the Native American population has exhibited explosive growth, increasing from 552,000 to 1,959,000, or 255% (Passel 1996, p. 79). This is demographically impossible without immigration, immigration which is nonetheless normally irrelevant to Native Americans. What happened is that the racial categories handled in the U.S. Census is based solely on self-identification. Until the 1960 Census, most of them with partial or distant Native American ancestry identified as "white" or "Hispanic"; however, after that, many of them, having been aroused by the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s (which will be discussed later), began proudly identifying as "Native American." Identification is, of course, not an objective fact but a subjective idea that can change, and, again, the racial reality is the social reality.

## What Is Ethnicity?

**Ethnicity** is a term that describes groups of people who share history and culture including customs, values, and norms. Within a racial category, there are several different ethnic groups. If race is likened to a nation (e.g., the U.S.), then, ethnicity is to its states or prefectures (California, New York, and so forth). For example, a racial category "white" includes British, German, French, and so forth. "Asian" includes Chinese, Korean, Japanese, and so forth. "Hispanic" includes Mexican, Dominican, Peruvian, and so forth.

"Black," however, is complicated and difficult; if that is about "African American" (the descendants of forced migrants for slavery), their ethnic origins related to "culture" are hardly traceable, but if that is "African," it's easy to show its "prefectures," such as Nigerian, Ghanaian, Kenyan, and so forth. Immigrants from these countries do not share the African American history and legacy, such as the Civil Rights Movement, the Harlem Renaissance, the blues, jazz, and so forth. Barack Obama, whose father is Kenyan and whose mother is white, for example, is not African American--although the *socially constructed* image of him identifies him to be so, erroneously.

New York is very much privileged. Owing to a variety of ethnic groups living in the city, we enjoy a variety of ethnic food. Today, for example, fast food restaurants serve Chinese lo mien, Indian curry, Mexican taco, Colombian empanadas, Japanese sushi, Italian pizza, Frankfurt sausage, French fries, Turkish kebab, Korean BBQ, Russian stroganoff, you name it...

## **Immigration Cacophonies**

When we talk about race/ethnicity in terms of social reality going on in the U.S., we must not forget to talk about **immigration** and its very much cacophonous history. The first mass immigration to the U.S. took place in the first half of the nineteenth century (Jones 1992). The wave was comprised of 5 million Europeans (mostly Irish, Germans, and so forth) called the "old immigrants," and its size was greater in number than the entire population of the U.S. at that time. Behind this stood was the great social changes resulting from the Industrial Revolution, for which farmers



were losing their means of livelihood in their homelands. Atlantic crossing became faster and cheaper, thanks to the invention of the steam engine.

Native-born Americans' attitudes toward immigrants have been ambiguous (Gordon 1964), and remain to be so, still today. Immigrants were, on the one hand, desired to swell the population and importance of states and territories, to man the farms of expanding prairie settlement, to work the mines, and to build the railroads and canals. Immigrants were especially convenient for capitalists to set the wages at the low level. Native-born Americans, placed at the bottom of the society, faced the situation in which they had to compete with immigrants over unskilled jobs. This remains the same today.

Culturally, on the other hand, many Americans began worrying about the fact that immigrants were bringing with them not just labor power but disturbingly their own religions, languages, and ways of conduct into the U.S. These Americans, Protestants by definition, heavily discriminated against the Irish as they were Catholics. The **Naturalization Act of 1790** defined the American as "white," meaning non-white immigrants could not apply for the U.S. citizenship. Based on this, these Americans defined the Irish as "black," arguing that they shouldn't be allowed to apply for U.S. citizenship.

In the middle of the nineteenth century came Chinese immigrants via Hawaiian sugar plantations, as cheap, and even disposable, laborers. They worked for the mining industry and transcontinental railroads, and many died for explosions for tunneling. They were unassimilable, even more so than the old immigrants. Throughout the 1850's and 1860's the Chinese in California were subjected to sporadic outburst of mob violence (Jones 1992). Chinatown, their ethnic enclave, was not just a haven but a bulwark for them to run into, when chased by roughnecks.

In the latter half of the nineteenth century, the main body of U.S. immigrants, which had been western Europeans, shifted toward eastern and southern Europeans (Jews, Italians, and so forth) called the "new immigrants." Italians had to move because the great social changes devastated their farming environments, especially the citrus and wine industries. Jews had to move for the pogroms, i.e., the deliberate

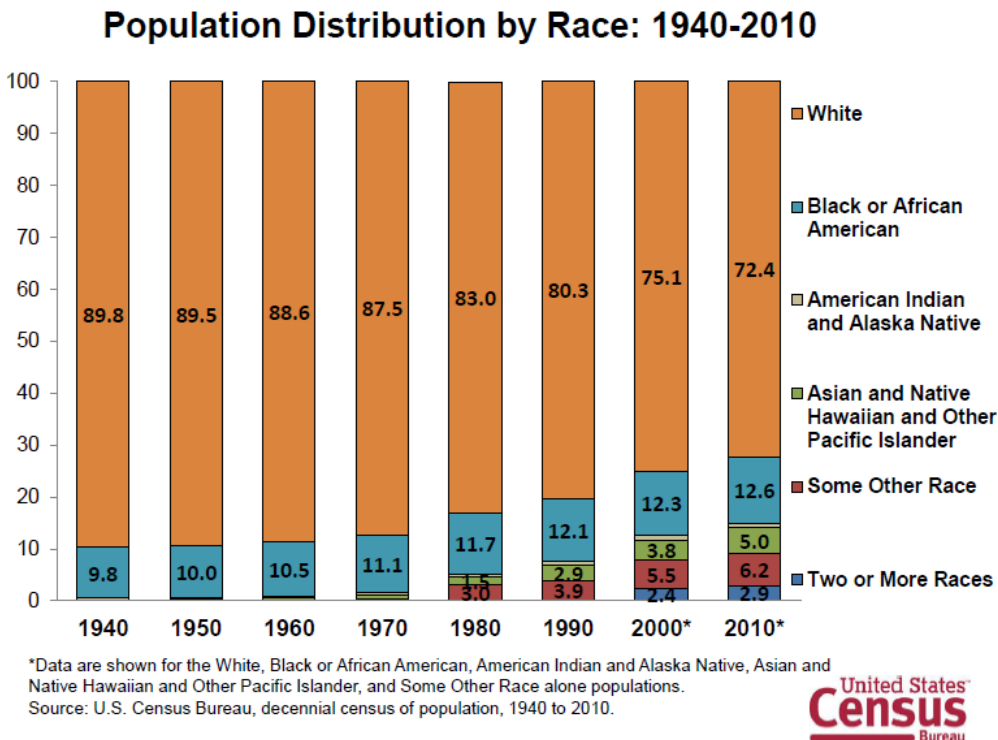
persecution of Jews condoned by the Russian government. Just as the Irish were identified as blacks, as mentioned above, Italians were considered non-white Hispanics. In the early 1890's, a wave of nativist violence targeted the new immigrants (Jones 1992). Antisemitism increased markedly, and the membership of Ku Klux Klan reached some two and a half million by 1923.

The anti-immigrant sentiments grew further and eventually led to the **Immigration Act of 1924**. This law allotted quotas to the various countries for immigration to the U.S. There would be 2% quotas based upon 1890 census, a change designed to reduce still further the proportion of southern and eastern European entries. Countries of Western Hemisphere, including Canada and Mexico, were exempted from the quota system. Chances of most Asians, such as the Chinese and the Japanese, for immigration were in reality uprooted.

Right after World War II, so-called war brides, mostly Japanese women who married American soldiers stationed in Japan, reopened the door to the U.S. immigration for non-whites. For them and their husbands, the War Brides Act of 1945 was enacted, allowing American military personnel to bring their foreign wives (Min 2006). Regarding the Naturalization Act of 1790 that defined the American as "white," however, the question arose: Can't the wife of an American become an American? To solve this problem, the **Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1952**, also known as the McCarran-Walter Act, was passed, eliminating race as a bar to immigration and giving preferences to relatives. Now, thanks to the war brides, immigrants no longer have to be white in order to apply for U.S. citizenship.

As the quota system set in the Immigration Act of 1924 was still intact, however, other than the war brides, the door of the U.S. immigration didn't open fully yet. It was the **Immigration Act of 1965** that finally removed the quota system and opened up the door fully for non-whites. It was entirely unexpected that the Act would shift the main body of the U.S. immigrants from Europeans to Asians and Latinos. The United States, since then, is no longer a country of whites. Having observed the effects of the Act becoming clearer and clearer by the 1990s (see the image below),

President Bill Clinton stated in his speech delivered to Americans: "We will all be minorities." In New York City, the situation is more extreme; between the years 2000 and 2010, 44.6% of the population is white, 27.5% is Hispanics of any race (which overlaps white), 25.1% is black, and 11.8% is Asians (World Population Review 2018).



## What Is Minority?

Sociologist Louis Wirth (1945) defined a **minority group** as “any group of people who, because of their physical or cultural characteristics, are singled out from the others in the society in which they live for differential and unequal treatment, and who therefore regard themselves as objects of collective discrimination.” The term **minority** connotes subordination and the term the **majority**, domination. The difference between them, again, lies in “power”--economic, social, and political--not in size in number. So President Bill Clinton, just like many others, erroneously used the term “minorities” (see above) although his intention to call for welcoming the new diverse era was nice.

# HOMELAND SECURITY



## Fighting Terrorism Since 1492

Courtesy of flickr.com

Native Americans became minority in their homeland. Why? The answer is easy: the difference in "power" between the invaders from Europe and the native Americans. At a glance, the image above looks funny. A closer attention to the meaning of the message "fighting terrorism since 1492," however, may make us notice the very tragic history of the Native Americans and the cacophonous history of the U.S. By the way, who is the terrorist in this message?

According to Charles Wagley and Marvin Harris (1958), a minority group is distinguished by five characteristics: (1) unequal treatment and less power over their lives, (2) distinguishing physical or cultural traits like skin color or language, (3) involuntary membership in the group, (4) awareness of subordination, and (5) high rate of in-group marriage. Hey, let's look around ourselves! Most people in New York share these characteristics, don't they?

Dollard's Frustration-Aggression theory (1939) suggested that the members of the majority tend to displace its unfocused aggression onto minorities. In order to mitigate their frustrated feelings, they blame minorities for social, economic, or political problems, for which minorities are not responsible. This social-psychological phenomenon is called **scapegoat**.

For example, the Nazi Germany blamed Jews for the economic disaster, a result of the defeat of Germany in World War I, for which Jews could not be responsible. Nonetheless, many Germans fervently supported the Nazi party, and entirely entrusted the political power to the party. Recall that

when people get an out-group or share an enemy group, they place themselves in in-group, within which solidarity can be heightened, often to a dangerous level. In 2016, one of the U.S. presidential candidates utilized this social-psychological phenomenon, placing Muslims and Latinos in out-group, and won the election!

## Summary

Race is fundamentally a social construct. Ethnicity is a term that describes shared culture and national origin. Minority groups are defined by their lack of power.

## Further Research

Explore aspects of race and ethnicity at PBS's site, "What Is Race?":  
[http://openstaxcollege.org/l/PBS\\_what\\_is\\_race](http://openstaxcollege.org/l/PBS_what_is_race)

## References

Caver, Helen Bush, and Mary T. Williams. 2011. "Creoles." *Multicultural America, Countries and Their Cultures*, December 7. Retrieved February 13, 2012 (<http://www.everyculture.com/multi/Bu-Dr/Creoles.html>).

CNN Library. (February 22, 2014). "Trayvon Martin Shooting Fast Facts." *CNN US*. N.p., Retrieved October 9, 2014 (<http://www.cnn.com/2013/06/05/us/trayvon-martin-shooting-fast-facts/>)

Dollard, J., et al. 1939. *Frustration and Aggression*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Gordon, Milton Myron. 1964. *Assimilation in American Life: The Role of Race, Religion, and National Origins*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Graves, Joseph. 2003. *The Emperor's New Clothes: Biological Theories of Race at the Millennium*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Jones, Maldwyn Allen. 1992. *American Immigration*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Min, Pyong Gap. 2006. *Asian Americans: Contemporary Trends and Issues*. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Pine Forge Press.

Omi, Michael, and Howard Winant. 1994. *Racial Formation in the United States: from the 1960s to the 1990s (2nd ed.)*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Passel, Jeffrey S. 1996. "The Growing American Indian Population, 1960-1990: Beyond Demography." Pp. 79-102 in *Changing Numbers, Changing Needs: American Indian Demography and Public Health*, edited by G. D. Sandefur, R. R. Rindfuss, and B. Cohen. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.

Wagley, Charles, and Marvin Harris. 1958. *Minorities in the New World: Six Case Studies*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Wirth, Louis. 1945. "The Problem of Minority Groups." *The Science of Man in the World Crisis*, edited by R. Linton: 347. In Hacker, Helen Mayer. 1951. *Women as a Minority Group*. Retrieved December 1, 2011 (<http://media.pfeiffer.edu/lridener/courses/womminor.html>).

World Health Organization. 2011. "Elder Maltreatment." Fact Sheet N-357. Retrieved December 19, 2011 (<http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs357/en/index.html>).

World Population Review. 2018. "New York City Population 2018." (<http://worldpopulationreview.com/us-cities/new-york-city-population/>).

## **Glossary**

dominant group

a group of people who have more power in a society than any of the subordinate groups

ethnicity

shared culture, which may include heritage, language, religion, and more

minority group

any group of people who are singled out from the others for differential and unequal treatment

scapegoat theory

a theory that suggests that the dominant group will displace its unfocused aggression onto a subordinate group

social construction of race

the school of thought that race is not biologically identifiable

subordinate group

a group of people who have less power than the dominant group

## Stereotypes, Prejudice, and Discrimination

- Explain the difference between stereotypes, prejudice, discrimination, and racism
- Identify different types of discrimination
- View racial tension through a sociological lens

A **stereotype** is an “oversimplified generalization” of a certain category of people, category that can be any type, such as race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, occupation, and so forth. It’s oversimplified, which means a stereotype can be true, to some extent. For example, some people believe that Asians are bad drivers. Yes, some Asians are bad drivers, but if you generalize this belief to all Asians, some of them would get mad and yell, “Excuse us!”

**Prejudice** is a “biased attitude” toward a certain category of people. It’s biased, and therefore can’t be true. It’s very important to note that prejudice is not based on our own experience or empirical knowledge; rather, we learn it from other people around us, including our parents. People can have prejudice against a group that they never met, or even a group that doesn’t exist. Below is an example that actually happened.

A sociology professor uses a sports gym. One day, in the shower room, a guy talked to him, saying, “You know what? Jews are increasing in this gym.” The professor asked, “How do you know who the Jews are?” He replied, “Smell.” “Smell?” “Yes, smell! Don’t you sense that bad smell unique to the Jews?” The thing is, this professor is a Jew.

Unlike stereotype and prejudice, both of which are attitudes (thinking), **discrimination** is behavior (acting). It is an unfair treatment of, or unfair action taken against, a certain category of people. But what is “unfair”? For the same performance, if other students got an A, but you got a C, that’s unfair. If other students got 93 points for the final and got an A, and if you got 73 points for that and got a C, that’s not unfair, at all, though.

Although discrimination is often based on prejudice, it can happen without prejudice. Likewise, prejudice does not necessarily lead to discrimination.



This means that one can happen without the other. An example of discrimination with no prejudice is this.

Assume you run a restaurant in California during World War II. Your neighbors share strong prejudice against Japanese immigrants, the enemy people, while you have no prejudice against them. Now, some Japanese come in to your restaurant and ask you if there is a table for them to have dinner. In your restaurant, some neighbors were having dinner, but stopped it, and now they are staring at the Japanese with obvious hatred. Would you let the Japanese in, or in order to protect your business, would you refuse them?

An example of prejudice that doesn't lead to discrimination is easier. Some professors may have prejudice against some certain categories of students, in reality, but almost none of them discriminates against their students. Why? That's because if they did, and if what they did were judged by the department to be discrimination against their students, they would be officially penalized, possibly losing their job. Hence, it's very important to eliminate room for discrimination through institutional efforts. Personal efforts are important, but if a given problem is deeply embedded in the society, they would barely work.

Discrimination can be grouped into two types: individual discrimination and institutional discrimination. **Individual discrimination** happens, if ever, on the personal level in everyday situation. Here is an example. There is a public bathroom for each gender inside the subway station, 86th street, on the 2nd Avenue line, in Manhattan, which can be seen from outside the MetroCard turnstile. If an MTA employee in the booth lets a person use the bathroom without swiping his/her MetroCard, but if the same employee says to you, although you're not taking the subway, "Bathroom? Swipe your MetroCard," that's individual discrimination. Although this discrimination is personal, room for this should be eliminated by structural efforts, i.e., by formal punishments.

**Institutional discrimination**, by contrast, involves the entire institution, such as schools, banks, realtors, and so forth. It happens structurally, not by chance. For example, earlier studies using national samples (Thomas 1991) showed that bankers were more likely to reject the loan applications of

minorities. When bankers defended themselves by saying that whites had better credit history, researchers retested their data. They found that even when applicants had identical credit, African Americans and Latinos were 60% more likely to be rejected. This bad behavior is institutionalized in the entire institution, and it is not personal. Of course, formal punishments should be used to eliminate room for this, as well.

## **Bye Bye "One-Drop Rule," Hello "Multiple Identities"**



Golfer Tiger Woods has Chinese, Thai, African American, Native American, and Dutch heritage. Individuals with multiple ethnic backgrounds are becoming more common.

(Photo courtesy of  
familymwr/flickr)

In the antebellum era (i.e., before the Civil War), while the sexual subordination of slaves resulted in children of mixed race called "amalgamation," based on the so-called "one-drop rule," these children were considered black and, therefore, treated as slaves.

Here is an example of the "one-drop rule," which would help us peep in the ridiculous aspect of the social reality related to race. In 1977, Susie Phipps, who believed she was white, applied for a passport and discovered that her Louisiana birth certificate listed her as "colored" (Moran 2001). Outraged, she insisted that "I was brought up white, I married white twice." She challenged the bureau's record. But the Louisiana courts refused to designate Phipps as white when the bureau introduced genealogical records showing that her great-great-great-great-grand mother was a slave.

In recent decades, the removal of miscegenation laws, which banned interracial sex and marriage, and a trend toward "diversity" have gradually made the image of racial exogamy (marriage outside of one's group) more acceptable than before. It is now common for the children of racially mixed parents to acknowledge and celebrate their various ethnic identities. Golfer Tiger Woods, for example, has Chinese, Thai, African American, Native American, and Dutch heritage; he jokingly refers to his ethnicity as "Cablinasian," a term he coined to combine several of his ethnic backgrounds. This trend seems, however, rarely straightforward. The media, indeed, still identify him, just like Barack Obama, as African American, erroneously, and the society accepts it.

## **Summary**

Stereotypes are oversimplified ideas about groups of people. Prejudice refers to thoughts and feelings, while discrimination refers to actions. Racism refers to the belief that one race is inherently superior or inferior to other races.

## Further Research

How far should First Amendment rights extend? Read more about the subject at the First Amendment Center:

[http://openstaxcollege.org/l/first\\_amendment\\_center](http://openstaxcollege.org/l/first_amendment_center)

Learn more about institutional racism at [www.splcenter.org](http://www.splcenter.org)

## References

Bouie, Jamelle. (August 19, 2014). "Why the Fires in Ferguson Won't End Soon." Slate.com. N.p., Retrieved October 9, 2014.

Herring, C., V. M. Keith, and H.D. Horton. 2004. *Skin Deep: How Race and Complexion Matter in the "Color-Blind" Era* (Ed.), Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press.

Hudson, David L. 2009. "Students Lose Confederate-Flag Purse Case in 5th Circuit." Retrieved December 7, 2011 (<http://www.firstamendmentcenter.org/students-lose-confederate-flag-purse-case-in-5th-circuit>).

Klonoff, E., and H. Landrine. 2000. "Is Skin Color a Marker for Racial Discrimination? Explaining the Skin Color-Hypertension Relationship." *Journal of Behavioral Medicine*. 23: 329–338.

Landor, Antoinette M., Leslie Gordon Simons, Ronald L. Simons, Gene H. Brody, Chalandra M. Bryant, Frederick X. Gibbons, Ellen M. Granberg, and Janet N. Melby. 2013. "Exploring the impact of skin tone on family dynamics and race-related outcomes." *Journal Of Family Psychology*. 27 (5): 817-826.

Lowery, Wesley and Darryl Fears. (August 31, 2014). "Michael Brown and Dorian Johnson, the friend who witnessed his shooting". *The Washington Post*. Retrieved October 9 , 2014. (<http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/michael-brown-and-dorian->

johnson-the-friend-who-witnessed-his-shooting/2014/08/31/bb9b47ba-2ee2-11e4-9b98-848790384093\_story.html)

McIntosh, Peggy. 1988. "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack." *White Privilege and Male Privilege: A Personal Account of Coming to See Correspondences Through Work in Women's Studies*. Wellesley, MA: Wellesley College Center for Research on Women.

Missouri Attorney General's Office. (n.d.) "Racial Profiling Report." N.p. Retrieved October 9, 2014 (<http://ago.mo.gov/VehicleStops/2013/reports/161.pdf>).

Nobles, Frances, and Julie Bosman. (August 17, 2014). "Autopsy Shows Michael Brown Was Struck at Least Six Times." *The New York Times*. Retrieved October 9, 2014.

Thomas, Paulette. 1991. "U.S. Examiners Will Scrutinize Banks with Poor Minority-Lending Histories." *Wall Street Journal* October 22: A2.

Yerevanci. 2013. "Public Opinion of Interracial Marriage in the United States." *Wikimedia Commons*. Retrieved December 23, 2014.

## Glossary

colorism

the belief that one type of skin tone is superior or inferior to another within a racial group

discrimination

prejudiced action against a group of people

institutional racism

racism embedded in social institutions

prejudice

biased thought based on flawed assumptions about a group of people

racial steering

the act of real estate agents directing prospective homeowners toward or away from certain neighborhoods based on their race

racism

a set of attitudes, beliefs, and practices that are used to justify the belief that one racial category is somehow superior or inferior to others

redlining

the practice of routinely refusing mortgages for households and business located in predominately minority communities

sedimentation of racial inequality

the intergenerational impact of de facto and de jure racism that limits the abilities of black people to accumulate wealth

stereotypes

oversimplified ideas about groups of people

white privilege

the benefits people receive simply by being part of the dominant group

## Theories of Race and Ethnicity

- Describe how major sociological perspectives view race and ethnicity
- Identify examples of culture of prejudice

## Theoretical Perspectives

We can examine issues of race and ethnicity through three major sociological perspectives: functionalism, conflict theory, and symbolic interactionism. As you read through these theories, ask yourself which one makes the most sense and why. Do we need more than one theory to explain racism, prejudice, stereotypes, and discrimination?

### Functionalism

In the view of functionalism, racial and ethnic inequalities must have served an important function in order to exist as long as they have. This concept, of course, is problematic. How can racism and discrimination contribute positively to society? A functionalist might look at “functions” and “dysfunctions” caused by racial inequality. Nash (1964) focused his argument on the way racism is functional for the dominant group, for example, suggesting that racism morally justifies a racially unequal society. Consider the way slave owners justified slavery in the antebellum South, by suggesting black people were fundamentally inferior to white and preferred slavery to freedom.

Another way to apply the functionalist perspective to racism is to discuss the way racism can contribute positively to the functioning of society by strengthening bonds between in-groups members through the ostracism of out-group members. Consider how a community might increase solidarity by refusing to allow outsiders access. On the other hand, Rose (1951) suggested that dysfunctions associated with racism include the failure to take advantage of talent in the subjugated group, and that society must divert from other purposes the time and effort needed to maintain artificially constructed racial boundaries. Consider how much money, time,

and effort went toward maintaining separate and unequal educational systems prior to the civil rights movement.

## **Conflict Theory**

Conflict theories are often applied to inequalities of gender, social class, education, race, and ethnicity. A conflict theory perspective of U.S. history would examine the numerous past and current struggles between the white ruling class and racial and ethnic minorities, noting specific conflicts that have arisen when the dominant group perceived a threat from the minority group. In the late nineteenth century, the rising power of black Americans after the Civil War resulted in draconian Jim Crow laws that severely limited black political and social power. For example, Vivien Thomas (1910–1985), the black surgical technician who helped develop the groundbreaking surgical technique that saves the lives of “blue babies” was classified as a janitor for many years, and paid as such, despite the fact that he was conducting complicated surgical experiments. The years since the Civil War have showed a pattern of attempted disenfranchisement, with gerrymandering and voter suppression efforts aimed at predominantly minority neighborhoods.

Feminist sociologist Patricia Hill Collins (1990) developed **intersection theory**, which suggests we cannot separate the effects of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, and other attributes. When we examine race and how it can bring us both advantages and disadvantages, it is important to acknowledge that the way we experience race is shaped, for example, by our gender and class. Multiple layers of disadvantage intersect to create the way we experience race. For example, if we want to understand prejudice, we must understand that the prejudice focused on a white woman because of her gender is very different from the layered prejudice focused on a poor Asian woman, who is affected by stereotypes related to being poor, being a woman, and her ethnic status.

## **Interactionism**



For symbolic interactionists, race and ethnicity provide strong symbols as sources of identity. In fact, some interactionists propose that the symbols of race, not race itself, are what lead to racism. Famed Interactionist Herbert Blumer (1958) suggested that racial prejudice is formed through interactions between members of the dominant group: Without these interactions, individuals in the dominant group would not hold racist views. These interactions contribute to an abstract picture of the subordinate group that allows the dominant group to support its view of the subordinate group, and thus maintains the status quo. An example of this might be an individual whose beliefs about a particular group are based on images conveyed in popular media, and those are unquestionably believed because the individual has never personally met a member of that group. Another way to apply the interactionist perspective is to look at how people define their races and the race of others. As we discussed in relation to the social construction of race, since some people who claim a white identity have a greater amount of skin pigmentation than some people who claim a black identity, how did they come to define themselves as black or white?

## **Summary**

Functionalist views of race study the role dominant and subordinate groups play to create a stable social structure. Conflict theorists examine power disparities and struggles between various racial and ethnic groups. Interactionists see race and ethnicity as important sources of individual identity and social symbolism. The concept of culture of prejudice recognizes that all people are subject to stereotypes that are ingrained in their culture.

## **Further Research**

Do you know someone who practices white privilege? Do you practice it? Explore the concept with this checklist:

[http://openstaxcollege.org/l/white\\_privilege\\_checklist](http://openstaxcollege.org/l/white_privilege_checklist) to see how much of it holds true for you or others.

## **References**

Collins, Patricia Hill. 2008. *Distinguishing Features of Black Feminist Thought*. London: Routledge.

Durkheim, Émile. 1982 [1895]. *The Rules of the Sociological Method*. Translated by W.D. Halls. New York: Free Press.

Nash, Manning. 1964. "Race and the Ideology of Race." *Current Anthropology* 3(3): 285–288.

Rose, Arnold. 1958 [1951]. *The Roots of Prejudice*, fifth edition. Paris, France: Unesco. Retrieved November 19  
(<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0007/000733/073342eo.pdf>).

## **Glossary**

culture of prejudice

the theory that prejudice is embedded in our culture

intersection theory

theory that suggests we cannot separate the effects of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, and other attributes

## Intergroup Relationships

- Explain different intergroup relations in terms of their relative levels of tolerance
- Give historical and/or contemporary examples of each type of intergroup relation

Intergroup relations (relationships between different groups of people) range along a spectrum between loyalty (in-group) and hatred (out-group). In the following sections discussed are: genocide, expulsion, segregation, cultural pluralism, assimilation, the melting pot, and amalgamation.

Of these, the first three practices are illegal today although informal segregation, which is seriously problematic, still takes place. Many people do not clearly understand the meanings of, and the differences among, the last four. For example, which one do you think is the closest to the idea of diversity? No, no, the answer is not "the melting pot." You'll see the answer to this question below. But start from the discussions about genocide, first.

## Genocide

**Genocide** is the deliberate annihilation (killing) of a targeted minority. The term has two parts, geno and cide. Geno means all and cide, killing--just like, infanticide (baby killing), homicide (human killing), pesticide (insect killing), and so forth. When sociologists use the term genocide, however, it doesn't literally mean "all killing," but it's about actions systematically taken to kill a large number of people belonging to a certain minority group.

Possibly the most well-known case of genocide is Hitler's attempt to exterminate the Jewish people in the first part of the twentieth century. Also known as the Holocaust, the explicit goal of Hitler's "Final Solution" was the eradication of European Jewry, as well as the destruction of other minority groups such as Catholics, people with disabilities, and homosexuals. With forced emigration, concentration camps, and mass executions in gas chambers, Hitler's Nazi regime was responsible for the deaths of 12 million people, 6 million of whom were Jewish.

Another example is what happened to Native Americans in the past. Some historians estimate that their populations dwindled from approximately 12 million in the year 1500 to barely 237,000 by the year 1900 (Lewy 2004), a decrease by 98% (!). In 1830 Congress passed an Indian Removal Act that empowered President Andrew Jackson to expel Native Americans east of the Mississippi (Steinberg 1981, p. 17) in order to expand the southern slave plantations. In 1838, some 12,000 Cherokee were forced on a cold winter to march to the west (about 2,200 miles away). As estimated 2,500 died during the trail, and another 1,500 died on what the Cherokee called the "Trail of Tears." Most of the deaths were caused by smallpox they were not immune to, smallpox that was *for some reason* attached to blankets given to them as "gifts" by the U.S. government.

Genocide is by no means a historical event having happened only in the past; it is still happening today (Business Insider 2017). See below, for example.

- Unlike the majority of the Buddhist country, the Rohingya are Muslim, and have long suffered as second-class citizens in Myanmar because most people in the country believe they are illegal immigrants and "terrorists" from Bangladesh. So far, up to 3,000 people have been killed in Myanmar, and at least 270,000 have been displaced.
- South Sudan became the world's newest country in 2011, but since 2013, the country has been mired in a brutal civil war. South Sudan's President Salva Kiir, a member of the Dinka ethnic group, has been using his army to wage a campaign of genocide and ethnic cleansing against the Dinka's main rival ethnic group, the Nuer, as well as other smaller local groups.
- In brutal, genocidal campaigns in Syria and Iraq, ISIS sought to systematically exterminate Yazidis, Shiites, and Christians and destroy their villages. They also carried out mass rapes in these communities. Although numbers remain hazy, thousands of people have been killed in these related genocides.
- The Central African Republic, an African country wedged mainly between the Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Sudan, and Chad, has been embroiled in a civil war ever since 2013 when the

country's Christian President François Bozizé was overthrown by a coalition of Muslim groups.

- In the mid-2000s, Darfur in Sudan was recognized as the first genocide of the 21st century by international observers. The ethnic killings began in 2003 when ethnically Arab militias supported by Sudan's President Omar Hassan al-Bashir began massacring non-Arab people and destroying their villages. The main victims of these campaigns have been the Fur people, but other small non-Arab groups were also affected.

## Expulsion

**Expulsion** is an action taken by the majority to kick out a certain minority group from a certain area. In some cases, such as the Trail of Tears and the Holocaust discussed above, expulsion can lead to genocide, but they are not necessarily intertwined. Either way, this action would be impossible to be taken without the overwhelming power of the majority over minorities. Right after the Japanese government's attack on Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, for example, President Franklin D. Roosevelt issued Executive Order to authorize the expulsion of anyone with one-eighth Japanese ancestry (i.e., one great-grandparent who was Japanese) or more--including offspring of white American parents--from their home states. Their personal properties were confiscated entirely. Over 120,000 legal Japanese residents and even Japanese U.S. citizens, many of them children, were held in internment camps for up to four years. In the 1990s, the U.S. executive branch issued a formal apology for this expulsion; reparation efforts continue today.

## Segregation

**Segregation** refers to the physical separation of minorities from the majority, in residence, workplace, school, and so forth. It can be either formal (*de jure*) or informal (*de facto*). In the U.S., for example, right after the Civil War, which abolished slavery, the so-called Jim Crow laws were enacted in order to *formerly* segregate emancipated ex-slaves. The laws mandated "separate but equal" policies and established two sections, "for

white" and "for colored," in public facilities, such as schools, public bathrooms, trains and buses, restaurants, and so forth.



In the "Jim Crow" South, it was legal to have "separate but equal" facilities for colored (black) and white. (Photo courtesy of Allen B. West)

Numbers of lawsuits were filed against the laws ever since. After a series of long struggles, the U.S. Supreme Court finally ruled in *Brown v Board of Education* of 1954 that "separate but equal" has no place in education because it violates the 14th amendment and is unconstitutional. Not only did this ruling end *de jure* segregation, but it further ignited the energy leading to the Civil Rights Movement that would bear fruit just ten years later.

Informally, however, people are still segregated, mostly by their social class, which tends to be related to their race. Middle class people, indeed, live in middle-class neighborhoods and lower class people, in lower-class neighborhoods. This itself is not a problem, constitutionally. As a result, however, this residential segregation, by social class as well as by race, leads to other forms of segregation. The quality of schools in poor neighborhoods, whose budgets can't be great, for example, tend to be poorer than those in rich areas. This can affect children's social class in adult to a

great extent. In terms of healthcare as well--as will be seen in Ch. 20, Health and Medicine--research indicates that white men live longer than black men, presumably because of the difference in the quality of healthcare available to them in their neighborhoods. *De facto* segregation is hence a serious issue, but nonetheless there seems to be no effort made by the government to deal with this.

## **Cultural Pluralism**

When the Anglo assimilation model, which forced all immigrants to follow the same Anglo Saxon's way of social conduct including the language, norms, and values, was predominant, German-born philosopher Horace Kallen offered the idea of **cultural pluralism** (1915), basically the same as what we call today multiculturalism or diversity (ta-dah, here is the answer to the question asked above!). He likened the Anglo model to "unison" and pluralism, to "harmony." That is, the Anglo model requires everybody to sing the same old Anglo-Saxon theme "America," in the same way, while pluralism allows people to sing their own parts that would result in harmony. Today, his idea is named a "salad bowl": a great mixture of different cultures where each culture retains its own identity and yet adds to the flavor of the whole. It's based on mutual respect among minorities, on the one hand, and between minorities and the majority, on the other hand. In reality, however, true pluralism is a difficult goal to reach. In the U.S., indeed, the mutual respect is often missing, and cultural differences aren't embraced as much as despised.

## **Assimilation**

**Assimilation**, or Anglo assimilation, refers to processes that generate homogeneity beyond the ethnic group level (Kazal 1995, p. 286), homogeneity which centers around the majority, quite the opposite of cultural pluralism. It is the process through which minorities are ultimately becoming the same as the members of the majority, in various terms including the first name, the language, dietary habit, the knowledge about celebrities, and so forth. In terms of the first name, for example, the most

popular name of Asian boys in New York City today is Ethan and that of Asian girls, Sophia (Data.gov 2011).

Assimilation is not an easy process for minorities to follow, involving three major steps: willingness, ability, and acceptance. The process asks three questions related to these steps.

1. Are you willing to become the same as the members of the majority?
2. Are you able to do so?
3. Do you believe you'll be accepted by the majority as one of its members?

To the first question, cultural pluralists would answer "No," and that would be it. Even if people answer "Yes" to the first two questions, though, many of them would stumble in reality on the third, i.e., acceptance. Below is the discussions related to the third question here. Assimilation theorist Milton Gordon (1964) observes that:

Many of them [the second generation immigrants] believed they heard the siren call of welcome to... America... But... the doors of the fraternity house, the city men's club, and the country club were slammed in the face of the immigrant's offspring... That invitation wasn't really there... it was... a 'look me over but don't touch me' invitation to [them]. (Gordon 1964, pp. 111-112)





For many immigrants to the United States, the Statue of Liberty is a symbol of freedom and a new life. Unfortunately, they often encounter prejudice and discrimination. (Photo courtesy of Mark Heard/flickr)

## The Melting Pot

The term **melting pot** comes from the famous play written by English Jew, Israel Zangwill, performed in the beginning of the twentieth century. The story is somewhat similar to that of *Romeo and Juliet*, a love story of the youth who suffer from an ongoing feud between their parents. *The Melting-Pot* is also a love story of a Jewish immigrant named David, whose family members had been killed in the pogroms (genocide condoned by the

Russian government), and a Russian Christian immigrant named Vera, whose father was the government officer responsible for the killing of David's family. Vera's father admits his guilt, but David forgives him, understanding that ethnic divisions and hatred are socially constructed and are not personal. Believing that "America is God's Crucible, the great Melting-Pot where all the races... are melting and reforming" (cited in Sollors 1986, p. 66), David proclaims:

DAVID: There she [America] lies, the great Melting Pot--listen! Can't you hear the roaring and the bubbling? There gapes her mouth [He points east]--the harbor where a thousand mammoth feeders come from the ends of the world to pour in their human freight. Ah, what a stirring and a seething! Celt and Latin, Slav and Teuton, Greek and Syrian--black and yellow...

VERA: Jew and Gentile...

DAVID: Yes, East and West, and North and South... How the great Alchemist melts and fuses them with his purging flame! Here shall they all unite to build the Republic of Man and the Kingdom of God. Ah, Vera, what is the glory of Rome and Jerusalem where all nations and races come to worship and look back, compared with the glory of America, where all races and nations come to labor and look forward...

Many scholars are more or less cynical about this melting-pot *dream* of the mixture of all races becoming into a totally new one. Even Werner Sollors, who supports the dream, clearly states that "the melting-pot idea is... based upon the belief in American ideals--rather than upon empirically observed reality" (1986, p. 70). Also, Milton Gordon (1964, p. 129) suggests that "the 'single melting pot' vision of America has been something of an illusion," and the reality should be seen, at best, as the "multiple melting pot." Even more clearly, Glazer and Moynihan (1970) assert that the "point about the melting pot... is that it did not happen. At least not in New York."

## Amalgamation

The term **amalgamation** is another word for "mixture," but its sociological meaning is somewhat ambiguous. It can be the merger between different "cultures," or it can be interbreeding or miscegenation between different

"races," or both. If only cultures are mixed with no miscegenation, centering around the majority, it can be seen as the product of the assimilation model. If both are involved, it can be seen as the product of the melting pot, in which people are mixed culturally and racially. If only miscegenation takes place without cultural amalgamation, it can be included in cultural pluralism. Actually, this can be observed among interracial marriages that involve the first generation of non-Western immigrants, such as Japanese. Again, the term amalgamation is ambiguous, just like the reality itself. One thing clear, though, is that without amalgamation, there would be no melting pot.

## **A Summary of the Assimilation/Non-Assimilation Models**

William Norman (1973) succinctly displays the differences among the assimilation/non-assimilation models discussed above in very simple formulas. Which one do you think is the closest to the reality going on around ourselves? As the reality is not only so complicated but is also changing all the time, there may be no clear and fixed answer to this. But just take a look at the formulas below and think about what they are telling us.

- Cultural Pluralism:  $A + B + C = A + B + C$ , where each maintains its original culture and identity.
- Assimilation:  $A + B + C = A$ , where A is the majority, and all races are becoming like A.
- The Melting Pot (Amalgamation):  $A + B + C = D$ , where D is a new race emerging as a result of the mixture of all races.

## **Summary**

Intergroup relations range from a tolerant approach of pluralism to intolerance as severe as genocide. In cultural pluralism, groups retain their own identity. In assimilation, groups conform to the identity of the dominant group. In the melting pot, groups combine to form a new group identity. In amalgamation, culture, or blood, or both are mixed together.

## Further Research

So you think you know your own assumptions? Check and find out with the Implicit Association Test:

[http://openstaxcollege.org/l/implicit\\_association\\_test](http://openstaxcollege.org/l/implicit_association_test)

What do you know about the treatment of Australia's aboriginal population? Find out more by viewing the feature-length documentary *Our Generation*: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tcq4oGL0wII>

## References

Asi, Maryam, and Daniel Beaulieu. 2013. "Arab Households in the United States: 2006–2010." *U.S. Census Bureau*. Retrieved November 19, 2014 (<http://www.census.gov/prod/2013pubs/acsbr10-20.pdf>).

Business Insider. 2017. "5 genocides that are still going on today."

Data.gove. 2011. "Most Popular Baby Names by Sex and Mother's Ethnic Group, New York City."

Glazer, Nathan and Moynihan, Daniel P. *Beyond the Melting Pot: The Negroes, Puerto Ricans, Jews, Italians, and Irish of New York City*. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1970.

Kallen, Horace M. 1915. "Democracy versus the Melting-Pot: A Study of American Nationality," *The Nation* 100 (2590) (February 18), pp. 190-4.

Kazal, Russell A. 1995. "Revisiting Assimilation: The Rise, Fall, and Reappraisal of a Concept in American Ethnic History," *American Historical Review* Vol. 100, No. 2 (April), pp 437-471.

Lewy, Guenter. 2004. "Were American Indians the Victims of Genocide?" Retrieved December 6, 2011 (<http://hnn.us/articles/7302.html>).

Newman, William M. 1973. *American Pluralism: A Study of Minority Groups and Social Theory*. New York: Harper & Row, Publishers.

Norris, Tina, Paula L. Vines, and Elizabeth M. Hoeffel. 2012. "The American Indian and Alaska Native Population: 2010." *U.S. Census Bureau*. Retrieved November 19, 2014 (<http://www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/briefs/c2010br-10.pdf>).

Sollors, Werner. 1986. *Beyond Ethnicity: Consent and Descent in American Culture*. New York: The Oxford University Press.

Steinberg, Stephen. 1981. *The Ethnic Myth: Race, Ethnicity, and Class in America*. Boston: Beacon Press.

Tatz, Colin. 2006. "Confronting Australian Genocide." *The Indigenous Experience: Global Perspectives*. Edited by Roger Maaka and Chris Andersen. Toronto, Canada: Canadian Scholars Press.

U.S. Census Bureau. 2014. "State and County Quickfacts." Retrieved November 19, 2014 (<http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/00000.html>).

## **Glossary**

### **amalgamation**

the process by which a minority group and a majority group combine to form a new group

### **assimilation**

the process by which a minority individual or group takes on the characteristics of the dominant culture

### **expulsion**

the act of a dominant group forcing a subordinate group to leave a certain area or even the country

### **genocide**

the deliberate annihilation of a targeted (usually subordinate) group

### **pluralism**

the ideal of the United States as a "salad bowl:" a mixture of different cultures where each culture retains its own identity and yet adds to the

“flavor” of the whole

segregation

the physical separation of two groups, particularly in residence, but also in workplace and social functions

## Race and Ethnicity in the United States

- Compare and contrast the different experiences of various ethnic groups in the United States
- Apply theories of intergroup relations, race, and ethnicity to different subordinate groups

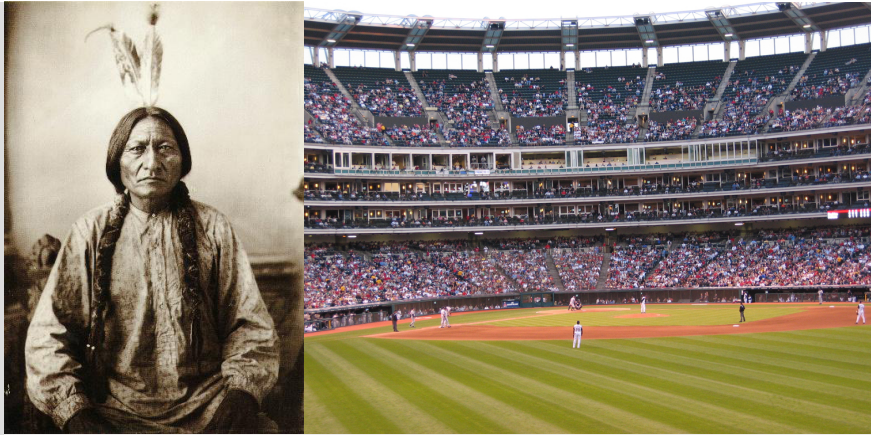
When colonists came to the New World, they found a land that did not need “discovering” since it was already occupied. While the first wave of immigrants came from Western Europe, eventually the bulk of people entering North America were from Northern Europe, then Eastern Europe, then Latin America and Asia. And let us not forget the forced immigration of African slaves. Most of these groups underwent a period of disenfranchisement in which they were relegated to the bottom of the social hierarchy before they managed (for those who could) to achieve social mobility. Today, our society is multicultural, although the extent to which this multiculturalism is embraced varies, and the many manifestations of multiculturalism carry significant political repercussions. The sections below will describe how several groups became part of U.S. society, discuss the history of intergroup relations for each faction, and assess each group’s status today.

### Native Americans

The only nonimmigrant ethnic group in the United States, Native Americans once numbered in the millions but by 2010 made up only 0.9 percent of U.S. populace; see above (U.S. Census 2010). Currently, about 2.9 million people identify themselves as Native American alone, while an additional 2.3 million identify them as Native American mixed with another ethnic group (Norris, Vines, and Hoeffel 2012).

**Note:**

Sports Teams with Native American Names



Many Native Americans (and others) believe sports teams with names like the Indians, Braves, and Warriors perpetuate unwelcome stereotypes. (Photo (a) courtesy of public domain/Wikimedia Commons; Photo (b) courtesy of Chris Brown/flickr)

The sports world abounds with team names like the Indians, the Warriors, the Braves, and even the Savages and Redskins. These names arise from historically prejudiced views of Native Americans as fierce, brave, and strong savages: attributes that would be beneficial to a sports team, but are not necessarily beneficial to people in the United States who should be seen as more than just fierce savages.

Since the civil rights movement of the 1960s, the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) has been campaigning against the use of such mascots, asserting that the “warrior savage myth . . . reinforces the racist view that Indians are uncivilized and uneducated and it has been used to justify policies of forced assimilation and destruction of Indian culture” (NCAI Resolution #TUL-05-087 2005). The campaign has met with only limited success. While some teams have changed their names, hundreds of professional, college, and K–12 school teams still have names derived from this stereotype. Another group, American Indian Cultural Support (AICS), is especially concerned with the use of such names at K–12 schools, influencing children when they should be gaining a fuller and



more realistic understanding of Native Americans than such stereotypes supply.

What do you think about such names? Should they be allowed or banned?

What argument would a symbolic interactionist make on this topic?

## **How and Why They Came**

The earliest immigrants to America arrived millennia before European immigrants. Dates of the migration are debated with estimates ranging from between 45,000 and 12,000 BCE. It is thought that early Indians migrated to this new land in search of big game to hunt, which they found in huge herds of grazing herbivores in the Americas. Over the centuries and then the millennia, Native American culture blossomed into an intricate web of hundreds of interconnected tribes, each with its own customs, traditions, languages, and religions.

## **History of Intergroup Relations**

Native American culture prior to European settlement is referred to as Pre-Columbian: that is, prior to the coming of Christopher Columbus in 1492. Mistakenly believing that he had landed in the East Indies, Columbus named the indigenous people “Indians,” a name that has persisted for centuries despite being a geographical misnomer and one used to blanket 500 distinct groups who each have their own languages and traditions.

The history of intergroup relations between European colonists and Native Americans is a brutal one. As discussed in the section on genocide, the effect of European settlement of the Americas was to nearly destroy the indigenous population. And although Native Americans’ lack of immunity to European diseases caused the most deaths, overt mistreatment of Native Americans by Europeans was devastating as well.

From the first Spanish colonists to the French, English, and Dutch who followed, European settlers took what land they wanted and expanded

across the continent at will. If indigenous people tried to retain their stewardship of the land, Europeans fought them off with superior weapons. A key element of this issue is the indigenous view of land and land ownership. Most tribes considered the earth a living entity whose resources they were stewards of, the concepts of land ownership and conquest didn't exist in Native American society. Europeans' domination of the Americas was indeed a conquest; one scholar points out that Native Americans are the only minority group in the United States whose subordination occurred purely through conquest by the dominant group (Marger 1993).

After the establishment of the United States government, discrimination against Native Americans was codified and formalized in a series of laws intended to subjugate them and keep them from gaining any power. Some of the most impactful laws are as follows:

- The Indian Removal Act of 1830 forced the relocation of any native tribes east of the Mississippi River to lands west of the river.
- The Indian Appropriation Acts funded further removals and declared that no Indian tribe could be recognized as an independent nation, tribe, or power with which the U.S. government would have to make treaties. This made it even easier for the U.S. government to take land it wanted.
- The Dawes Act of 1887 reversed the policy of isolating Native Americans on reservations, instead forcing them onto individual properties that were intermingled with white settlers, thereby reducing their capacity for power as a group.

Native American culture was further eroded by the establishment of Indian boarding schools in the late nineteenth century. These schools, run by both Christian missionaries and the United States government, had the express purpose of “civilizing” Native American children and assimilating them into white society. The boarding schools were located off-reservation to ensure that children were separated from their families and culture. Schools forced children to cut their hair, speak English, and practice Christianity. Physical and sexual abuses were rampant for decades; only in 1987 did the Bureau of Indian Affairs issue a policy on sexual abuse in boarding schools. Some scholars argue that many of the problems that Native Americans face

today result from almost a century of mistreatment at these boarding schools.

## **Current Status**

The eradication of Native American culture continued until the 1960s, when Native Americans were able to participate in and benefit from the civil rights movement. The Indian Civil Rights Act of 1968 guaranteed Indian tribes most of the rights of the United States Bill of Rights. New laws like the Indian Self-Determination Act of 1975 and the Education Assistance Act of the same year recognized tribal governments and gave them more power. Indian boarding schools have dwindled to only a few, and Native American cultural groups are striving to preserve and maintain old traditions to keep them from being lost forever.

However, Native Americans (some of whom now wished to be called American Indians so as to avoid the “savage” connotations of the term “native”) still suffer the effects of centuries of degradation. Long-term poverty, inadequate education, cultural dislocation, and high rates of unemployment contribute to Native American populations falling to the bottom of the economic spectrum. Native Americans also suffer disproportionately with lower life expectancies than most groups in the United States.

## **African Americans**

As discussed in the section on race, the term African American can be a misnomer for many individuals. Many people with dark skin may have their more recent roots in Europe or the Caribbean, seeing themselves as Dominican American or Dutch American. Further, actual immigrants from Africa may feel that they have more of a claim to the term African American than those who are many generations removed from ancestors who originally came to this country. This section will focus on the experience of the slaves who were transported from Africa to the United

States, and their progeny. Currently, the U.S. Census Bureau (2014) estimates that 13.2 percent of the United States' population is black.

## **How and Why They Came**

If Native Americans are the only minority group whose subordinate status occurred by conquest, African Americans are the exemplar minority group in the United States whose ancestors did not come here by choice. A Dutch sea captain brought the first Africans to the Virginia colony of Jamestown in 1619 and sold them as indentured servants. This was not an uncommon practice for either blacks or whites, and indentured servants were in high demand. For the next century, black and white indentured servants worked side by side. But the growing agricultural economy demanded greater and cheaper labor, and by 1705, Virginia passed the slave codes declaring that any foreign-born non-Christian could be a slave, and that slaves were considered property.

The next 150 years saw the rise of U.S. slavery, with black Africans being kidnapped from their own lands and shipped to the New World on the trans-Atlantic journey known as the Middle Passage. Once in the Americas, the black population grew until U.S.-born blacks outnumbered those born in Africa. But colonial (and later, U.S.) slave codes declared that the child of a slave was a slave, so the slave class was created. By 1808, the slave trade was internal in the United States, with slaves being bought and sold across state lines like livestock.

## **History of Intergroup Relations**

There is no starker illustration of the dominant-subordinate group relationship than that of slavery. In order to justify their severely discriminatory behavior, slaveholders and their supporters had to view blacks as innately inferior. Slaves were denied even the most basic rights of citizenship, a crucial factor for slaveholders and their supporters. Slavery poses an excellent example of conflict theory's perspective on race

relations; the dominant group needed complete control over the subordinate group in order to maintain its power. Whippings, executions, rapes, denial of schooling and health care were all permissible and widely practiced.

Slavery eventually became an issue over which the nation divided into geographically and ideologically distinct factions, leading to the Civil War. And while the abolition of slavery on moral grounds was certainly a catalyst to war, it was not the only driving force. Students of U.S. history will know that the institution of slavery was crucial to the Southern economy, whose production of crops like rice, cotton, and tobacco relied on the virtually limitless and cheap labor that slavery provided. In contrast, the North didn't benefit economically from slavery, resulting in an economic disparity tied to racial/political issues.

A century later, the civil rights movement was characterized by boycotts, marches, sit-ins, and freedom rides: demonstrations by a subordinate group that would no longer willingly submit to domination. The major blow to America's formally institutionalized racism was the Civil Rights Act of 1964. This Act, which is still followed today, banned discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, or national origin. Some sociologists, however, would argue that institutionalized racism persists.

## **Current Status**

Although government-sponsored, formalized discrimination against African Americans has been outlawed, true equality does not yet exist. The National Urban League's *2011 Equality Index* reports that blacks' overall equality level with whites has dropped in the past year, from 71.5 percent to 71.1 percent in 2010. The *Index*, which has been published since 2005, notes a growing trend of increased inequality with whites, especially in the areas of unemployment, insurance coverage, and incarceration. Blacks also trail whites considerably in the areas of economics, health, and education.

To what degree do racism and prejudice contribute to this continued inequality? The answer is complex. 2008 saw the election of this country's first African American president: Barack Hussein Obama. Despite being

popularly identified as black, we should note that President Obama is of a mixed background that is equally white, and although all presidents have been publicly mocked at times (Gerald Ford was depicted as a klutz, Bill Clinton as someone who could not control his libido), a startling percentage of the critiques of Obama have been based on his race. The most blatant of these was the controversy over his birth certificate, where the “birther” movement questioned his citizenship and right to hold office. Although blacks have come a long way from slavery, the echoes of centuries of disempowerment are still evident.

## **Asian Americans**

Like many groups this section discusses, Asian Americans represent a great diversity of cultures and backgrounds. The experience of a Japanese American whose family has been in the United States for three generations will be drastically different from a Laotian American who has only been in the United States for a few years. This section primarily discusses Chinese, Japanese, and Vietnamese immigrants and shows the differences between their experiences. The most recent estimate from the U.S. Census Bureau (2014) suggest about 5.3 percent of the population identify themselves as Asian.

### **How and Why They Came**

The national and ethnic diversity of Asian American immigration history is reflected in the variety of their experiences in joining U.S. society. Asian immigrants have come to the United States in waves, at different times, and for different reasons.

The first Asian immigrants to come to the United States in the mid-nineteenth century were Chinese. These immigrants were primarily men whose intention was to work for several years in order to earn incomes to support their families in China. Their main destination was the American West, where the Gold Rush was drawing people with its lure of abundant money. The construction of the Transcontinental Railroad was underway at

this time, and the Central Pacific section hired thousands of migrant Chinese men to complete the laying of rails across the rugged Sierra Nevada mountain range. Chinese men also engaged in other manual labor like mining and agricultural work. The work was grueling and underpaid, but like many immigrants, they persevered.

Japanese immigration began in the 1880s, on the heels of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. Many Japanese immigrants came to Hawaii to participate in the sugar industry; others came to the mainland, especially to California. Unlike the Chinese, however, the Japanese had a strong government that negotiated with the U.S. government to ensure the well-being of their immigrants. Japanese men were able to bring their wives and families to the United States, and were thus able to produce second- and third-generation Japanese Americans more quickly than their Chinese counterparts.

The most recent large-scale Asian immigration came from Korea and Vietnam and largely took place during the second half of the twentieth century. While Korean immigration has been fairly gradual, Vietnamese immigration occurred primarily post-1975, after the fall of Saigon and the establishment of restrictive communist policies in Vietnam. Whereas many Asian immigrants came to the United States to seek better economic opportunities, Vietnamese immigrants came as political refugees, seeking asylum from harsh conditions in their homeland. The Refugee Act of 1980 helped them to find a place to settle in the United States.



Thirty-five  
Vietnamese  
refugees wait to  
be taken aboard  
the amphibious  
USS *Blue Ridge*  
(LCC-19). They  
are being  
rescued from a  
thirty-five-foot  
fishing boat 350  
miles northeast  
of Cam Ranh  
Bay, Vietnam,  
after spending  
eight days at  
sea. (Photo  
courtesy of U.S.  
Navy/Wikimedi  
a Commons)

## History of Intergroup Relations

Chinese immigration came to an abrupt end with the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. This act was a result of anti-Chinese sentiment burgeoned by a depressed economy and loss of jobs. White workers blamed Chinese migrants for taking jobs, and the passage of the Act meant the number of Chinese workers decreased. Chinese men did not have the funds to return to China or to bring their families to the United States, so they remained physically and culturally segregated in the Chinatowns of large cities. Later legislation, the Immigration Act of 1924, further curtailed Chinese immigration. The Act included the race-based National Origins Act, which was aimed at keeping U.S. ethnic stock as undiluted as possible by reducing



“undesirable” immigrants. It was not until after the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 that Chinese immigration again increased, and many Chinese families were reunited.

Although Japanese Americans have deep, long-reaching roots in the United States, their history here has not always been smooth. The California Alien Land Law of 1913 was aimed at them and other Asian immigrants, and it prohibited aliens from owning land. An even uglier action was the Japanese internment camps of World War II, discussed earlier as an illustration of expulsion.

## **Current Status**

Asian Americans certainly have been subject to their share of racial prejudice, despite the seemingly positive stereotype as the model minority. The **model minority** stereotype is applied to a minority group that is seen as reaching significant educational, professional, and socioeconomic levels without challenging the existing establishment.

This stereotype is typically applied to Asian groups in the United States, and it can result in unrealistic expectations, by putting a stigma on members of this group that do not meet the expectations. Stereotyping all Asians as smart and capable can also lead to a lack of much-needed government assistance and to educational and professional discrimination.

## **Hispanic Americans**

Hispanic Americans have a wide range of backgrounds and nationalities. The segment of the U.S. population that self-identifies as Hispanic in 2013 was recently estimated at 17.1 percent of the total (U.S. Census Bureau 2014). According to the 2010 U.S. Census, about 75 percent of the respondents who identify as Hispanic report being of Mexican, Puerto Rican, or Cuban origin. Of the total Hispanic group, 60 percent reported as Mexican, 44 percent reported as Cuban, and 9 percent reported as Puerto Rican. Remember that the U.S. Census allows people to report as being more than one ethnicity.

Not only are there wide differences among the different origins that make up the Hispanic American population, but there are also different names for the group itself. The 2010 U.S. Census states that “Hispanic” or “Latino” refers to a person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin regardless of race.” There have been some disagreements over whether Hispanic or Latino is the correct term for a group this diverse, and whether it would be better for people to refer to themselves as being of their origin specifically, for example, Mexican American or Dominican American. This section will compare the experiences of Mexican Americans and Cuban Americans.

### **How and Why They Came**

Mexican Americans form the largest Hispanic subgroup and also the oldest. Mexican migration to the United States started in the early 1900s in response to the need for cheap agricultural labor. Mexican migration was often circular; workers would stay for a few years and then go back to Mexico with more money than they could have made in their country of origin. The length of Mexico’s shared border with the United States has made immigration easier than for many other immigrant groups.

Cuban Americans are the second-largest Hispanic subgroup, and their history is quite different from that of Mexican Americans. The main wave of Cuban immigration to the United States started after Fidel Castro came to power in 1959 and reached its crest with the Mariel boatlift in 1980. Castro’s Cuban Revolution ushered in an era of communism that continues to this day. To avoid having their assets seized by the government, many wealthy and educated Cubans migrated north, generally to the Miami area.

### **History of Intergroup Relations**

For several decades, Mexican workers crossed the long border into the United States, both legally and illegally, to work in the fields that provided produce for the developing United States. Western growers needed a steady

supply of labor, and the 1940s and 1950s saw the official federal Bracero Program (*bracero* is Spanish for *strong-arm*) that offered protection to Mexican guest workers. Interestingly, 1954 also saw the enactment of “Operation Wetback,” which deported thousands of illegal Mexican workers. From these examples, we can see the U.S. treatment of immigration from Mexico has been ambivalent at best.

Sociologist Douglas Massey (2006) suggests that although the average standard of living in Mexico may be lower in the United States, it is not so low as to make permanent migration the goal of most Mexicans. However, the strengthening of the border that began with 1986’s Immigration Reform and Control Act has made one-way migration the rule for most Mexicans. Massey argues that the rise of illegal one-way immigration of Mexicans is a direct outcome of the law that was intended to reduce it.

Cuban Americans, perhaps because of their relative wealth and education level at the time of immigration, have fared better than many immigrants. Further, because they were fleeing a Communist country, they were given refugee status and offered protection and social services. The Cuban Migration Agreement of 1995 has curtailed legal immigration from Cuba, leading many Cubans to try to immigrate illegally by boat. According to a 2009 report from the Congressional Research Service, the U.S. government applies a “wet foot/dry foot” policy toward Cuban immigrants; Cubans who are intercepted while still at sea will be returned to Cuba, while those who reach the shore will be permitted to stay in the United States.

## **Current Status**

Mexican Americans, especially those who are here illegally, are at the center of a national debate about immigration. Myers (2007) observes that no other minority group (except the Chinese) has immigrated to the United States in such an environment of illegality. He notes that in some years, three times as many Mexican immigrants may have entered the United States illegally as those who arrived legally. It should be noted that this is due to enormous disparity of economic opportunity on two sides of an open border, not because of any inherent inclination to break laws. In his report,

“Measuring Immigrant Assimilation in the United States,” Jacob Vigdor (2008) states that Mexican immigrants experience relatively low rates of economic and civil assimilation. He further suggests that “the slow rates of economic and civic assimilation set Mexicans apart from other immigrants, and may reflect the fact that the large numbers of Mexican immigrants residing in the United States illegally have few opportunities to advance themselves along these dimensions.”

By contrast, Cuban Americans are often seen as a model minority group within the larger Hispanic group. Many Cubans had higher socioeconomic status when they arrived in this country, and their anti-Communist agenda has made them welcome refugees to this country. In south Florida, especially, Cuban Americans are active in local politics and professional life. As with Asian Americans, however, being a model minority can mask the issue of powerlessness that these minority groups face in U.S. society.

**Note:**

Arizona’s Senate Bill 1070



Protesters in Arizona dispute the harsh new anti-immigration law.  
(Photo courtesy of rprathap/flickr)

As both legal and illegal immigrants, and with high population numbers, Mexican Americans are often the target of stereotyping, racism, and

discrimination. A harsh example of this is in Arizona, where a stringent immigration law—known as SB 1070 (for Senate Bill 1070)—has caused a nationwide controversy. The law requires that during a lawful stop, detention, or arrest, Arizona police officers must establish the immigration status of anyone they suspect may be here illegally. The law makes it a crime for individuals to fail to have documents confirming their legal status, and it gives police officers the right to detain people they suspect may be in the country illegally.

To many, the most troublesome aspect of this law is the latitude it affords police officers in terms of whose citizenship they may question. Having “reasonable suspicion that the person is an alien who is unlawfully present in the United States” is reason enough to demand immigration papers (Senate Bill 1070 2010). Critics say this law will encourage racial profiling (the illegal practice of law enforcement using race as a basis for suspecting someone of a crime), making it hazardous to be caught “Driving While Brown,” a takeoff on the legal term Driving While Intoxicated (DWI) or the slang reference of “Driving While Black.” Driving While Brown refers to the likelihood of getting pulled over just for being nonwhite.

SB 1070 has been the subject of many lawsuits, from parties as diverse as Arizona police officers, the American Civil Liberties Union, and even the federal government, which is suing on the basis of Arizona contradicting federal immigration laws (ACLU 2011). The future of SB 1070 is uncertain, but many other states have tried or are trying to pass similar measures. Do you think such measures are appropriate?

## **Arab Americans**

If ever a category was hard to define, the various groups lumped under the name “Arab American” is it. After all, Hispanic Americans or Asian Americans are so designated because of their countries of origin. But for Arab Americans, their country of origin—Arabia—has not existed for centuries. In addition, Arab Americans represent all religious practices, despite the stereotype that all Arabic people practice Islam. As Myers (2007) asserts, not all Arabs are Muslim, and not all Muslims are Arab, complicating the stereotype of what it means to be an Arab American.

Geographically, the Arab region comprises the Middle East and parts of northern Africa. People whose ancestry lies in that area or who speak primarily Arabic may consider themselves Arabs.

The U.S. Census has struggled with the issue of Arab identity. The 2010 Census, as in previous years, did not offer an “Arab” box to check under the question of race. Individuals who want to be counted as Arabs had to check the box for “Some other race” and then write in their race. However, when the Census data is tallied, they will be marked as white. This is problematic, however, denying Arab Americans opportunities for federal assistance. According to the best estimates of the U.S. Census Bureau, the Arabic population in the United States grew from 850,000 in 1990 to 1.2 million in 2000, an increase of .07 percent (Asi and Beaulieu 2013).

### **Why They Came**

The first Arab immigrants came to this country in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. They were predominantly Syrian, Lebanese, and Jordanian Christians, and they came to escape persecution and to make a better life. These early immigrants and their descendants, who were more likely to think of themselves as Syrian or Lebanese than Arab, represent almost half of the Arab American population today (Myers 2007). Restrictive immigration policies from the 1920s until 1965 curtailed all immigration, but Arab immigration since 1965 has been steady. Immigrants from this time period have been more likely to be Muslim and more highly educated, escaping political unrest and looking for better opportunities.

### **History of Intergroup Relations**

Relations between Arab Americans and the dominant majority have been marked by mistrust, misinformation, and deeply entrenched beliefs. Helen Samhan of the Arab American Institute suggests that Arab-Israeli conflicts in the 1970s contributed significantly to cultural and political anti-Arab sentiment in the United States (2001). The United States has historically

supported the State of Israel, while some Middle Eastern countries deny the existence of the Israeli state. Disputes over these issues have involved Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, and Palestine.

As is often the case with stereotyping and prejudice, the actions of extremists come to define the entire group, regardless of the fact that most U.S. citizens with ties to the Middle Eastern community condemn terrorist actions, as do most inhabitants of the Middle East. Would it be fair to judge all Catholics by the events of the Inquisition? Of course, the United States was deeply affected by the events of September 11, 2001. This event has left a deep scar on the American psyche, and it has fortified anti-Arab sentiment for a large percentage of Americans. In the first month after 9/11, hundreds of hate crimes were perpetrated against people who looked like they might be of Arab descent.

The proposed Park51 Muslim Community Center generated heated controversy due to its close proximity to Ground Zero. In these photos, people march in protest against the center, while counter-protesters demonstrate their support. (Photos (a) and (b) courtesy of David Shankbone/Wikimedia Commons)



## Current Status

Although the rate of hate crimes against Arab Americans has slowed, Arab Americans are still victims of racism and prejudice. Racial profiling has proceeded against Arab Americans as a matter of course since 9/11. Particularly when engaged in air travel, being young and Arab-looking is enough to warrant a special search or detainment. This Islamophobia



(irrational fear of or hatred against Muslims) does not show signs of abating. Scholars noted that white domestic terrorists like Timothy McVeigh, who detonated a bomb at an Oklahoma courthouse in 1995, have not inspired similar racial profiling or hate crimes against whites.

## **White Ethnic Americans**

As we have seen, there is no minority group that fits easily in a category or that can be described simply. While sociologists believe that individual experiences can often be understood in light of their social characteristics (such as race, class, or gender), we must balance this perspective with awareness that no two individuals' experiences are alike. Making generalizations can lead to stereotypes and prejudice. The same is true for white ethnic Americans, who come from diverse backgrounds and have had a great variety of experiences. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2014), 77.7 percent of U.S. adults currently identify themselves as white alone. In this section, we will focus on German, Irish, Italian, and Eastern European immigrants.

## **Why They Came**

White ethnic Europeans formed the second and third great waves of immigration, from the early nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth century. They joined a newly minted United States that was primarily made up of white Protestants from England. While most immigrants came searching for a better life, their experiences were not all the same.

The first major influx of European immigrants came from Germany and Ireland, starting in the 1820s. Germans came both for economic opportunity and to escape political unrest and military conscription, especially after the Revolutions of 1848. Many German immigrants of this period were political refugees: liberals who wanted to escape from an oppressive government. They were well-off enough to make their way inland, and they formed heavily German enclaves in the Midwest that exist to this day.

The Irish immigrants of the same time period were not always as well off financially, especially after the Irish Potato Famine of 1845. Irish immigrants settled mainly in the cities of the East Coast, where they were employed as laborers and where they faced significant discrimination.

German and Irish immigration continued into the late 19th century and earlier 20th century, at which point the numbers for Southern and Eastern European immigrants started growing as well. Italians, mainly from the Southern part of the country, began arriving in large numbers in the 1890s. Eastern European immigrants—people from Russia, Poland, Bulgaria, and Austria-Hungary—started arriving around the same time. Many of these Eastern Europeans were peasants forced into a hardscrabble existence in their native lands; political unrest, land shortages, and crop failures drove them to seek better opportunities in the United States. The Eastern European immigration wave also included Jewish people escaping pogroms (anti-Jewish uprisings) of Eastern Europe and the Pale of Settlement in what was then Poland and Russia.

## **History of Intergroup Relations**

In a broad sense, German immigrants were not victimized to the same degree as many of the other subordinate groups this section discusses. While they may not have been welcomed with open arms, they were able to settle in enclaves and establish roots. A notable exception to this was during the lead up to World War I and through World War II, when anti-German sentiment was virulent.

Irish immigrants, many of whom were very poor, were more of an underclass than the Germans. In Ireland, the English had oppressed the Irish for centuries, eradicating their language and culture and discriminating against their religion (Catholicism). Although the Irish had a larger population than the English, they were a subordinate group. This dynamic reached into the new world, where Anglo Americans saw Irish immigrants as a race apart: dirty, lacking ambition, and suitable for only the most menial jobs. In fact, Irish immigrants were subject to criticism identical to that with which the dominant group characterized African Americans. By

necessity, Irish immigrants formed tight communities segregated from their Anglo neighbors.

The later wave of immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe was also subject to intense discrimination and prejudice. In particular, the dominant group—which now included second- and third-generation Germans and Irish—saw Italian immigrants as the dregs of Europe and worried about the purity of the American race (Myers 2007). Italian immigrants lived in segregated slums in Northeastern cities, and in some cases were even victims of violence and lynchings similar to what African Americans endured. They worked harder and were paid less than other workers, often doing the dangerous work that other laborers were reluctant to take on.

## **Current Status**

The U.S. Census from 2008 shows that 16.5 percent of respondents reported being of German descent: the largest group in the country. For many years, German Americans endeavored to maintain a strong cultural identity, but they are now culturally assimilated into the dominant culture.

There are now more Irish Americans in the United States than there are Irish in Ireland. One of the country's largest cultural groups, Irish Americans have slowly achieved acceptance and assimilation into the dominant group.

Myers (2007) states that Italian Americans' cultural assimilation is "almost complete, but with remnants of ethnicity." The presence of "Little Italy" neighborhoods—originally segregated slums where Italians congregated in the nineteenth century—exist today. While tourists flock to the saints' festivals in Little Italies, most Italian Americans have moved to the suburbs at the same rate as other white groups.

## **Summary**

The history of the U.S. people contains an infinite variety of experiences that sociologists understand follow patterns. From the indigenous people

who first inhabited these lands to the waves of immigrants over the past 500 years, migration is an experience with many shared characteristics. Most groups have experienced various degrees of prejudice and discrimination as they have gone through the process of assimilation.

## Further Research

Are people interested in reclaiming their ethnic identities? Read this article and decide:

The White Ethnic Revival: [http://openstaxcollege.org/l/ethnic\\_revival](http://openstaxcollege.org/l/ethnic_revival)

What is the current racial composition of the United States? Review up-to-the minute statistics at the United States Census Bureau here: <http://www.census.gov/>

## References

ACLU. 2011. "Appellate Court Upholds Decision Blocking Arizona's Extreme Racial Profiling Law." American Civil Liberties Union. Retrieved December 8, 2011 (<http://www.aclu.org/immigrants-rights/appellate-court-upholds-decision-blocking-arizona-s-extreme-racial-profiling-law-0>).

Greely, Andrew M. 1972. *That Most Distressful Nation: The Taming of the American Irish*. Chicago: Quadrangle Books.

Lewy, Guenter. 2004. "Were American Indians the Victims of Genocide?" Retrieved December 6, 2011 (<http://hnn.us/articles/7302.html>).

Marger, Martin. 2003. *Race and Ethnic Relations: American and Global Perspectives*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

American Indian Cultural Support. "Mascots: Racism in Schools by State." 2005. Retrieved December 8, 2011 (<http://www.aics.org/mascot/mascot.html>).

Massey, Douglas S. 2006. "Seeing Mexican Immigration Clearly." *Cato Unbound*. Retrieved December 4, 2011 (<http://www.cato-unbound.org/2006/08/20/douglas-s-massey/seeing-mexican-immigration-clearly/>).

Myers, John P. 2007. *Dominant-Minority Relations in America*. Boston: Pearson.

National Congress of American Indians. 2005. "The National Congress of American Indians Resolution #TUL-05-087: Support for NCAA Ban on 'Indian' Mascots." Retrieved December 8, 2011 ([http://www.ncai.org/attachments/Resolution\\_dZoHILXNEzXOuYlebzAihFwqFzfNnTHDGJVwjaujdNvnsFtxUVd\\_TUL-05-087.pdf](http://www.ncai.org/attachments/Resolution_dZoHILXNEzXOuYlebzAihFwqFzfNnTHDGJVwjaujdNvnsFtxUVd_TUL-05-087.pdf)).

Senate Bill 1070. 2010. State of Arizona. Retrieved December 8, 2011 (<http://www.azleg.gov/legtext/49leg/2r/bills/sb1070s.pdf>).

Tatz, Colin. 2006. "Confronting Australian Genocide." Pp. 125-140 in *The Indigenous Experience: Global Perspectives*. Edited by Roger Maaka and Chris Andersen. Toronto, Canada: Canadian Scholars'.

U.S. Census Bureau. 2010. "State and County Quickfacts." Retrieved February 22, 2012 (<http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/00000.html>).

U.S. Department of Homeland Security. 2010. "Persons Obtaining Legal Permanent Resident Status by Region and Selected Country of Last Residence: Fiscal Years 1820 to 2010." *Yearbook of Immigration Statistics*. Retrieved December 6, 2011 (<http://www.dhs.gov/files/statistics/publications/LPR10.shtm>).

Vigdor, Jacob L. 2008. "Measuring Immigrant Assimilation in the United States." Manhattan Institute for Policy Research Civic Report 53. Retrieved December 4, 2011 ([http://www.manhattan-institute.org/html/cr\\_53.htm](http://www.manhattan-institute.org/html/cr_53.htm)).

## Glossary

model minority

the stereotype applied to a minority group that is seen as reaching higher educational, professional, and socioeconomic levels without protest against the majority establishment